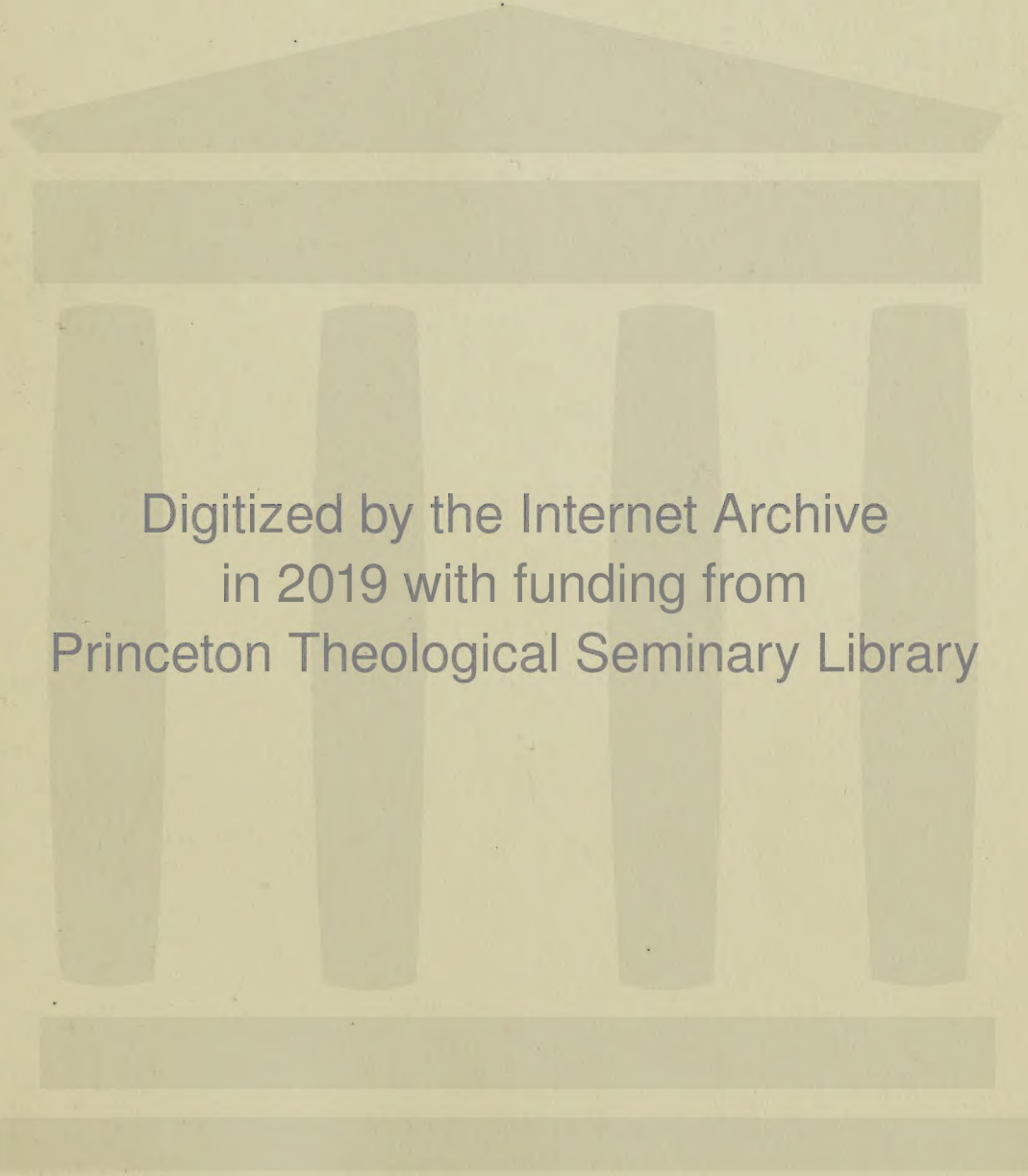


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The religion of Plato



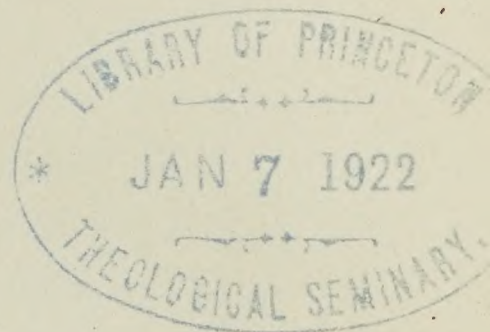




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# THE RELIGION OF PLATO



BY  
PAUL ELMER MORE

AUTHOR OF "SHELBURNE ESSAYS"

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

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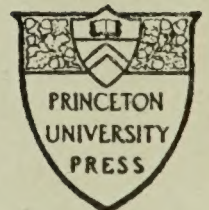
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## PREFACE

In the Preface to my *Platonism* I said that my purpose in publishing that work was to lay the foundation for a series of studies on the origins and early environment of Christianity and on various modern revivals of philosophic religion. Four years have passed since those lectures were delivered and printed, and the project which then stood rather vaguely before me has taken more definite shape. My plan now is that the series—or better, perhaps, the core of the series—should consist of four volumes. Of these the first is presented herewith; the second will deal with the Hellenistic philosophies, principally Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Neoplatonism; the third will be on Christianity, and the fourth will contain a number of essays on fundamental questions raised in the course of the foregoing studies.

As I have already observed, and may have to observe again, my intention is not at all to compose a history of Greek philosophy or of Christian dogma; the work in these fields has been done thoroughly and repeatedly. Nor am I concerned with ultimate origins. No doubt, to take the present volume, an exposition of Plato's sources would be interesting and would throw a clarifying

light on some of his religious ideas; but this field also has been well covered, notably by Erwin Rohde. Somewhere one must start, some restriction one must accept; and the inclusions and limitations imposed on the task here begun are determined by the fact that it is undertaken with a very definite thesis in view. Just what that thesis is it may be well to state at the outset in the fewest possible words.

My belief then is that Greek literature, philosophic and religious, pagan and Christian, from Plato to St. Chrysostom and beyond that to the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A. D., is essentially a unit and follows at the centre a straight line. This body of thought I call the Greek Tradition, since the main force in preserving it intact while assimilating large accretions of foreign matter was the extraordinary genius of the Greek speech. The initial impulse to the movement was given by a peculiar form of dualism developed by Plato from the teaching of his master Socrates. The great Hellenistic philosophies—Epicurean, Stoic, and Neoplatonic—were attempts, each on a different line, to reconcile the dualistic inconsistency in the nature of things, as we know them, by forcing our experience into the Procrustean bed of reason. And each of these philosophies, it may be said here, by its rationalistic rejection of the paradox in the nature of things only succeeded at

the last in falling into grosser paradoxes of logic and ethics. Christianity, on the contrary, notwithstanding its importation of a powerful foreign element into the tradition, and despite the disturbance of its metaphysical theology, was the true heir and developer of Platonism, truer than any of the pagan philosophies. And by the side of the orthodox faith, as set forth in the Creed of Nicea and the Definition of Chalcedon, there ran a succession of heresies which endeavoured, each again on its own line, to reconcile the paradox of the two natures and one person of Christ by methods curiously resembling the monistic rationalism of the heretical philosophies, if I may so call them.

It is this tradition, Platonic and Christian at the centre, this realization of an immaterial life, once felt by the Greek soul and wrought into the texture of the Greek language, that lies behind all our western philosophy and religion. Without it, so far as I can see, we should have remained barbarians; and, losing it, so far as I can see, we are in peril of sinking back into barbarism. Unfortunately the direct tradition passed in the East into the keeping of a people who had no strength of heart and mind to maintain it, and, roughly speaking, with the death of Chrysostom, the virtue had at last gone out of it; then Greece came to an end. But in the West

the tradition met a different fate. There it was taken up by a people of stronger nerve, who showed in religion the same faculty of assimilation as they had shown in pure literature, and who passed the inheritance on to the vigorous young races of the North.

Yet if the Latin genius assimilated much, it also adapted; and the tradition, as it comes to us through this medium, assumed a new *êthos* at the first, and in the centuries since the separation of East and West it has received accretions which threaten the integrity of its foundation. I do not mean that religion has gained nothing by its transmission through the Latin mind; a certain note of character and worldly wisdom it wanted, and these Rome and her heirs could give. Nor would I belittle the intellectual achievement of the great doctors of the western Church and the western schools in the Middle Ages and since the Renaissance. But withal I am convinced that in certain important matters the Latin, and I may add the Teutonic, mode of thought has perverted the stream of philosophy and religion, and that the need of the modern world becomes daily more urgent to make a return to the purer source of our spiritual life. This does not imply that we should forget all the secular learning of the intervening ages, or that we should cease to be ourselves, if that were possible; but it does recognize

in the Greek Tradition something which we must recover if religion is not to disappear and leave our existence dismally impoverished, something without which our wisdom may become vanity and our science a bondage. "We now are turning," says Dr. Foakes Jackson in his *History of the Christian Church*, "from the great men whose writings made the Christianity of the Middle Ages and of the Reformation, from St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, from Luther and Calvin, to the Greek thinkers, St. Athanasius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Cyril, to help the religious difficulties of a scientific age." I would broaden Dr. Jackson's statement by regarding this eastward movement as the culmination of a half-conscious tendency of the English Church from the time of the Reformation; and I should like to modify it by including Plato with the masters of eastern theology.

The volume now offered, as I have said, is the first of four which are designed to constitute a single connected treatise. The preceding volume, *Platonism*, may be taken as an introduction to the series, and in the main it fulfills that office suitably enough; but, owing to the fact that when it was written the larger project of the series was not clearly formed, some things are included in it which belong more properly to the body of the work, and some things are omitted which might

naturally be expected in an introduction. That must be my apology if any reader is annoyed by what may seem unnecessary repetitions in these two books on Plato.

The narrowing of time and the chances of life are a warning that I should be well content if these four volumes, which I have called the core of the series, are brought to completion. But still "a dream cometh through the multitude of business," and a man's "heart taketh not rest in the night"—which, the Preacher adds, "is also vanity." Already other subjects, on the fringe of the projected circle, are pressing upon my attention. A volume on the tragedians would offer an opportunity to fill out the background to Plato's religious ideas; a special study of Clement of Alexandria, with translations of passages from his works duly selected and arranged, would elucidate the relations of Platonism and Christianity; essays on the Cambridge Platonists and the Tractarians of Oxford might furnish an interesting illustration of the never fully realized trend of Anglican thought. But these things lie on the lap of the gods; and now I remember the prayer of Marcus Aurelius: "The work of philosophy is simple and modest, let me not be drawn away into vain pomp of words."

As a control upon the discussion of the various aspects of Plato's religion, it has seemed advisable

that the reader should have actually before him a translation of the passage on which in each case the argument is chiefly based. Thus chapter ii, introducing the topic of philosophy, gives the hypothetical paragraphs of the second book of *The Republic*; chapter iv contains the theological excursus that forms the tenth book of the *Laws*; chapter vii epitomizes the myth of creation from the *Timaeus*; and chapter x is from the general preamble in the fourth and fifth books of the *Laws*, dealing with worship and the religious life. If there is a more heart-breaking task than the attempt to convert Plato's Greek into English, I do not know it, and any one who has tried his hand thereat will understand my regret that it was not permissible to print from Jowett or some other of the standard translations. As it is, I have borrowed words and phrases pretty freely from my predecessors. In general my version follows the original closely. The only liberty I have allowed myself is to omit, without indication, the scattered bits of talk that break the continued flow of the argument, or, in a few cases, to incorporate a question or reply into the main discourse. This procedure has involved the occasional neglect of a term of address. Omissions of a larger nature are indicated.

In conclusion a sentence or two regarding the footnotes. Some of these, more indeed than I

like, are controversial. They must be excused by the necessity, as I am bound to see it, of clearing Platonism of the false metaphysical interpretations that have been clustering about it since the days of the so-called Neoplatonists. As for the rest of the notes their aim, when not mere references, is to keep constantly in view the main thesis of this book as a member of the series, viz. that the religion of Plato is not an isolated phenomenon but an integral part of the great Tradition. It may be that I should have attained my object better if the quotations in the notes also had been turned into English; but something, I felt, ought to be conceded to those readers who cherish the speech of Plato and Paul and Chrysostom, and for other readers the sight of the unfamiliar letters may serve as a provocative reminder that our spiritual and intellectual inheritance is still intrinsically Greek.

P. E. M.

Princeton, N. J.,

May 31, 1921.



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# THE RELIGION OF PLATO

## CHAPTER I

### THE COMPONENTS OF RELIGION

The subject of the present volume is the religion of Plato as part of a great spiritual adventure of the ancient world from the death of Socrates to the Council of Chalcedon just eight centuries and a half later. This movement, despite large importations from without, was essentially a product of the Hellenic mind; but its record comes to us in two languages, Greek and Latin, whose genius was strikingly different. One of the peculiarities of the Greek tongue is its richness in distinctions where often it lacks terms to gather these distinctions under a common head. And nowhere is this peculiarity more marked than in the subject we have to consider; for, strange as it may seem, Greek has no expression for the general idea conveyed by the word "religion," which we take from the Latin. The nearest approach to it perhaps is *eusebeia*, or *theosebeia*; but the meaning of these terms is rather "piety," an aspect of religion, than religion in the more comprehensive sense. No word, or

combination of words, can be found in the language of Epicurus, or of Plato and St. Athanasius, to carry the exact equivalent of "religion" in the tremendous line of the Epicurean poet of Rome: *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*. On the other hand it is equally true that Latin, strong in generalizations but poor in distinctions, had no native resource for discriminating the main components of what is really a complex phenomenon, and for terms to designate these was obliged to borrow from its sister speech. If "religion" is Latin, "philosophy" and "theology" and "mythology" are Greek.

Now this linguistic difference corresponds to a deep-seated divergence in ways of thinking. That is not to say that the Latin mind was totally incapable of analysis; Latin did in fact adopt the Greek terminology for the various components of religion, and so handed them on to us. Nor does it follow that, because the Greek language possessed no definite term for religion, therefore the Hellenic mind was completely insensible to the generalization lying behind diversity. Such an inference would be unwarranted, for an idea may be operative although there be no single word available to express it. But it is true that these traits of the Latin and the Greek languages are indicative of an original bias or emphasis in the mind and temper of the two

peoples, and that a language tends to preserve such a bias or emphasis among its inheritors. We can see this in the fact that, even apart from other modifications introduced by the temper of Rome, primitive Christianity as it is presented in the Latin Fathers gives the impression of an unanalysed experience of the whole soul, whereas in the Greek Fathers it is comparatively easy to keep in view the strands of which that experience is composed. Undoubtedly, so far as religion is a matter of character and the will, it happens that power has been transmitted with the Latin unity of conception; but it is at least a question whether such gain in power has not been at the expense of clear thinking.<sup>1</sup> The driving force of religion would seem to be connected with something unanalysable at its heart; its surest defence against critical attack, on the contrary, may be found in a more intellectual comprehension of its structure. And so, in an age of sceptical criticism, if we care to recover our inheritance of faith, it may

<sup>1</sup> An illustration of the danger inherent in this tendency to generalize without regard to distinctions may be found in the authorized version of James i, 27: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." St. James is defining *thrêskeia*, "religious worship or usage," which is not coterminous with the Latin *religio*; and to take his words as a definition of religion *in toto*, as they are often taken today, leads to a deplorable impoverishment of the spiritual life.

be advisable to look beyond the Latin sources, on which our western world has mainly depended, to the Hellenistic Fathers of the Church, and beyond them to the earlier thinkers of Athens, to Plato first of all. By this process we may be able to get a clearer understanding of what is universally valid in religious experience, and to separate the deciduous overgrowth from what is still of vital importance for us in the Greek Tradition.

In the following chapters I propose to study the religion of Plato first under the three aspects of philosophy and theology and mythology, and then as a composite whole; but as a preliminary it may be well to take a hasty survey of the changing fortune of these terms in the course of their ancient history.

It is natural that philosophy, as standing for what was most presumptuously Hellenic and pagan, should have had the most diversified career. Among classical writers, from the beginning or from a very early period, the word acquired a double sense, practical and theoretic. At one time it might denote merely an unreasoned discipline or way of life, as, for example, in the speech composed by Lysias to be spoken by an uneducated cripple before the Senate of Athens: "For this, I think, is the aim and philosophy of all the afflicted, that they may live under their misfortune with as little discomfort as possible."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *For the Cripple* 10.

Between this ethical use of the word and its higher, more theoretical sense the interval is bridged over by such a thought as the following from Marcus Aurelius: "What then can help us on our way? One thing, and one alone, philosophy; which is to keep the spirit within us (*ton endon daimona*) inviolate and free from scathe."<sup>3</sup> From this it is an easy step to Plato's consummation of wisdom in self-knowledge, and to that "philosophy of the soul" which is a recognition of its diviner potentiality.

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The mediator between classical and Christian writers was Philo the Jew, a contemporary of Jesus, who made it the business of his life to reinterpret the Mosaic scriptures in the terms of Platonic Idealism, yet would not hesitate on occasion to speak slightly, even contemptuously, of Plato in his desire to establish religion on a basis other than merely human wisdom.<sup>4</sup> To Philo, the Hebrew mystics of his own day were in possession of a higher truth than the wisest of the gentiles had been able to reach by means of their uninspired philosophy. As secular studies con-

<sup>3</sup> *Meditations* ii, 17.

<sup>4</sup> See particularly, in his *De Vita Contemplativa* (which with Conybeare I hold to be authentic), the account of the life of study and fasting led by the sect of Therapeutae in Egypt, and the contrast he draws between their modest Sabbathday *pannychides* and the banquets of the Greeks as described in the *Symposia* of Plato and Xenophon.

tribute to the acquisition of philosophy, whose servants they are, so, he says, philosophy is but the contributory and handmaid of that divine wisdom (*sophia*) with which religion really begins. Philosophy, for purely human reasons, may teach the control of the passions and the governance of the tongue, and these indeed are desirable in themselves, but they become a more solemn and holy matter when practised for the honour and good pleasure of God.<sup>5</sup>

To the earliest Christian writers, the so-called Apostolic Fathers, philosophy was virtually nonexistent. Their immediate successors, upon whom first fell the task of justifying the faith intellectually, were in too precarious a position to make concessions to their most dangerous rivals, and among the Apologists of the middle decades of the second century the prevailing note is hatred and abuse of Greek philosophy.<sup>6</sup> Justin is more generous than the others; but the real change comes with Clement of Alexandria, whose life-work in the Christian field was much like that of Philo in the Jewish, an effort to enrich religion with the spoils of Platonic Idealism

<sup>5</sup> *De Congressu Eruditionis Gratia* 79.—Yet elsewhere, notably in the *De Vita Contemplativa*, ἡ πατριος φιλοσοφία is for him the purest wisdom of religion. All these words are used now loosely, and now strictly.

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Tatian §§2, 25, 32; Athenagoras 11; Theophilus of Antioch iii, 3-8.



while still maintaining that revelation had brought a higher kind of wisdom to mankind. In his use of the word philosophy Clement is not consistent. Sometimes it designates for him a merely negative training in logic which will enable the believer to expose the errors of a hostile sophistry; at other times it is a moral discipline, chastening the will and preparing the heart for the reception of truth; while again it is adopted boldly as a synonym for the revealed truth.<sup>7</sup> But in the main Clement follows the Philonic scheme of a progress from secular studies to philosophy and from this to divine wisdom,<sup>8</sup> although his *sophia* has acquired a more definite content than the Jew's, being now the perfect and self-sufficient doctrine of the Word, the power and wisdom of God displayed in the economy of salvation.<sup>9</sup>

Later, when their rivals have been beaten from the field and are no longer a serious menace, the Doctors of the Church can afford to forget the appropriation of the word philosophy to pagan

<sup>7</sup> *Stromata* I, xx, 100; xvi, 80; xxviii, 177; xxix, 182; *et passim*.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, *Stromata* I, v, 30, where he simply paraphrases the passage of Philo's *De Cong. Er.* noted above. Origen has expressed the same notion, *Philocalia* xii, 1: 'Ἴν, ὅπερ φασὶ φιλοσόφων παῖδες περὶ γεωμετρίας καὶ μουσικῆς, γραμματικῆς τε καὶ ῥητορικῆς καὶ ἀστρονομίας, ὡς συνερίθων φιλοσοφία, τοῦθ' ἡμεῖς εἵπωμεν καὶ περὶ αὐτῆς φιλοσοφίας πρὸς χριστιανισμόν.

<sup>9</sup> *Stromata* I, xx, 100.

wisdom, and do not hesitate to usurp it for their special vocabulary. Thus, for instance, a popular moralist like Chrysostom can appeal to the philosophy of a mixed congregation almost in the manner of a Lysias addressing the Senate of Athens, while a theorist such as Gregory of Nyssa feels no need to apologize or explain when he refers to the whole Christian *êthos* as a "high philosophy."<sup>10</sup> The word, in its progress among Christian writers from neglect to hostility, from hostility to condescension, and from condescension to lordly appropriation, has come a complete circle. Philosophy is no longer a humble preparation for a higher form of wisdom, as it was in Philo and, at times, in Clement, but is itself the norm of conduct and the supreme wisdom; it is not contrary to religion, but a part or aspect of religion. Yet still with this difference which clings to it from its long history, that in Christianity the perception of truth has become secondary to and dependent upon theological and mythological dogma, whereas to the pagan it was primary and free. This similarity and distinction will grow clearer, I trust, as we proceed.

Meanwhile, before passing to the other constituents of religion, it is important to observe a

<sup>10</sup> For examples of this sliding use of the word see Chrysostom, *In Mat.* 186D, 187D, 190C, 235B, 238E, 252D, 273C, 328A, *In Phil.* 211D; Gregory, *Cat. Or.* 18 (with Srawley's note).

further distinction. In both the classical and the late Christian writers the word philosophy, as we have seen, had a double application. At one time it was taken ethically, or practically, to designate a certain self-mastery in conduct, while at another time its sense is intellectual and seems to rise into the region of pure intuition. The point I would make is that no real inconsistency exists in this double aspect of the word, and that even when most theoretical philosophy still retains, in proper usage, something of its simpler, practical value; it implies always theory as concerned with actual life and as resting on a definite experience of the soul. In this way philosophy, as a study of the deeper and more inward facts of consciousness, was rightly contrasted with those encyclical, or secular, studies (grammar, rhetoric, mathematics, music, etc.) which are its handmaids; and, as still pragmatic in its method, it was distinguished with equal propriety, though perhaps not with equal regularity, from those bastard overgrowths of eristic, or metaphysics, which are its most inveterate enemies for the very reason that they so subtly resemble it.

In close connexion with the passage in which Philo sets forth the friendly place of philosophy between secular studies and the wisdom (*sophia*) that looks to the honour of God, he states in strong language the irreconcilable difference be-

tween true philosophy and the abuse of reason to which the name metaphysics may be restricted:

“As among physicians the so-called word-cure offers no help for the sick—for diseases are cured by medicine and surgery and diet, but not by words—so in philosophy there are mere word-dealers and word-catchers, who have no will or skill to heal the life filled with ailments, but from early youth to extreme old age are not ashamed to squabble over opinions and syllables, as if happiness lay in the endless and idle pursuit of terms, and not in improving character as the source of human life.”<sup>11</sup>

The same condemnation of the logomachy of metaphysics, as a caricature of genuine philosophy, is one of the constant topics of the later Christian philosophers. Clement of Alexandria returns to it again and again.<sup>12</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus puts the case bluntly in the introduction to his *Theological Orations*: “On what subjects and how far should we philosophize? On those subjects that are within our reach, and as far as the mental state and faculty of the hearer can follow.” The whole trend of his argument shows how clearly he saw that the dead hand of

<sup>11</sup> *De Cong. Er.* 53. “Word-cure,” λογιατρεία. I do not know to what particular sect of faith-healers the title is applied. But the term is not quite clearly defined by Liddell and Scott as associated with Galen’s λογίατρος, “a physician only in words.” See Galen III, 145; VIII, 670.

<sup>12</sup> *E. g. Stromata* V, i, 5-7.

metaphysics takes hold of the mind only when the soul has lost its birthright of self-knowledge and is driven to chase shadows in place of substances. He would have subscribed heartily to the saying of a modern divine who, like Milton, had "some not insignificant taste for the sweetness of philosophy," and was also well versed in the long vexations of metaphysical debate: "The genuine ground of all communion with the infinite having sunk away within us, all sorts of logical proofs, and logical disproofs, will quarrel together about primitive certainties that shroud themselves from both."<sup>13</sup>

There is no serious difficulty in keeping the sphere of philosophy separate in our mind from the other two components of religion, and, so far as it is a matter of mere terminology, there would be no harm in emphasizing this separation by limiting the word religion to designate the sphere of theology and mythology taken together as distinct from philosophy. That indeed was the actual usage of many Greek writers, and we too may find it convenient at times to employ philosophy and religion, after the manner of Philo, in this contrasted sense. It is a fact to be remembered also that philosophy, so understood, may be even antagonistic to religion. But generally, in the present volume at least, I propose

<sup>13</sup> James Martineau, *Essays* I, 268.—See Appendix A.

to take religion in its broader scope as embracing philosophy as well as theology and mythology. These terms have a way now of gliding one into the other, and now of standing apart, as do the subjects they connote.

By theology I mean, as its etymology implies, the science of God, the consideration of His nature in itself. Here again we have to face the fact that the terminology at our command is a part of the popular language, and as such is commonly used without technical precision. Theology is often extended to include a contemplative, even a metaphysical, study of the whole field of the divine activity, and the poverty and fluidity of our vocabulary may justify on occasion this more general use of the word. But for the purpose in hand we have a right to limit its meaning to that part of religious theory which Gregory of Nazianzus had in mind when he gave to his orations against the Eunomians the distinctive title of *Theological*. His subject matter, with insignificant deviations, is strictly that to which I have limited theology in my definition, that is, the being and nature of God, here regarded, as would be inevitable with a Christian, in relation to the question of the Trinity as one Deity subsisting in three persons. And it is noteworthy that in his effort to unravel the perplexities of this paradox, Gregory, while never for a

moment obliterating the boundaries between philosophy and theology, does not disdain to fall back upon the procedure and theorems of philosophy to elucidate his theology. So in his most eloquent passage on the divine vision, admitting that all we can see of God is only as it were the back parts, as beheld by Moses on Mount Sinai—only the indications of Himself which He has left behind Him in the wonder and majesty of the created world—confessing that the revelation of God as Father, Son, and Spirit is no more than a clumsy translation into human speech of truths that surpass human understanding, Gregory compares the theologian who would approach Deity to the philosopher in Plato's allegory of the cave, who, brought from darkness face to face with the celestial world of Ideas, cannot endure to raise his eyes forthright to their ineffable glory, but must lower his gaze to their shadowy images and reflections.<sup>14</sup> The ascent of philosophy and theology are thus, in Gregory's mind, parallel and may be taken one to illustrate the other; but their goal and object are not the same: one ends in the vision of the eternal Ideas, the other looks to the knowledge of God. Religion should embrace both.

Theology and mythology, especially in the Christian scheme, are never far apart, and in their

<sup>14</sup> *Or. Theol.* ii, 3.

confines actually merge together. The ground on which they meet is the question of Providence. In its more general aspect, however, Providence, as an expression of the power and wisdom and justice of God Himself, would properly come under the range of theology; and so, as we shall see, it was treated by Plato. In Christianity the classification is complicated by the double rôle of one of the persons of the Trinity. Considered in relation to the Logos as creator and governor of the world, Providence remains fairly within the competence of theology; but as carried out in the plan of salvation by the condescension of the Logos to human nature and His reassumption of human nature into deity it falls more specifically under the head of mythology. For mythology is just that part of religion which is concerned with the intermingling of the divine and the human spheres of being, whether made manifest by the appearance of the gods among men, or looked for in the extension of man's life into the world of the gods.

As for the word mythology, we must admit that it is totally rejected by the Christians, and this for the obvious reason that it would seem to place the Incarnation on the same level with such myths of Greece as the amorous exploits of Zeus among the daughters of men and the scarcely less decorous adventures of Apollo, and



would assimilate the terrors of the judgment day to the pains of Sisyphus in Hades and the pleasures of the heroes in the islands of the Hesperides.<sup>15</sup> Instead therefore of regarding the Incarnation as a myth they preferred to speak of it as the “economy,” that is as God’s particular management of the human race so as to raise it from its fallen estate; while to the judgment of mankind at the divine tribunal and its consequences they gave the name of “eschatology,” the science of the last things. If in our handling of this department of religion we recur to the classical usage, it is because we have no better term than myth to include the intermingling of the two worlds whether exemplified in the doings of the pagan gods, or in Plato’s allegory of creation and future judgment, or in the Christian economy and eschatology. But we would adopt the word without prejudice. Because the unsavoury escapades of a pagan god are called myths, it does not follow that any disrespect is intended to the incarnation of Christ by treating it also under the head of mythology. A myth may be false and silly; it may be the veil, more or less transparent, of sublime truth.

For the connexion of theology with mythology and the distinction between them in Christian literature one may refer to the *Catechetical Ora-*

<sup>15</sup> Justin Martyr, *Apology* I, liv.

tion of Gregory of Nyssa, which is virtually contemporaneous with the *Theological Orations* of the other Gregory.<sup>16</sup> Of the forty chapters composing the work of the Nyssean the first four are theological, discussing in briefest terms the being and nature of God as displayed in the Trinity. The next four chapters deal with the more general question of Providence as involved in the creation of man and the origin of evil; they serve as a transition from the theological introduction to the mythological argument (chapters ix-xl) which occupies the remainder of the book. To the narrowly orthodox this part of the work has not been entirely acceptable, as showing traces of the suspected doctrines of Origen. To the less sensitive reader it may appeal as one of the greater products of the Greek religious imagination, confused perhaps here and there in its logic (some groping is almost inherent in the nature of the subject matter), yet on the whole presenting the act of God's self-abasement to humanity and the consequent restoration of humanity to its divine perfection in the form of a stirring spiritual drama. It is the sublimation of mythology; for mythology, in the end, cannot be defined better than as the drama of religion.

<sup>16</sup> Another illustration may be found in the *Contra Gentiles* and the *De Incarnatione* of Athanasius. The first is theology, the second mythology.

Enough has been said, I trust, to show how the analytical view of religion, as composed of philosophy and theology and mythology, was common to the Greek writers, both pagan and Christian, from Plato to St. Chrysostom. The elements remain the same; but it is true also that as we pass from pagan to Christian the order of assurance and of temporal acquisition among these elements undergoes a complete reversion, and that the lesson we take to ourselves will depend on our attitude towards what is no less than a revolution within the circle of the Greek Tradition. To the pagan, particularly the Platonist, philosophy was the dominating element; here was the starting point of religion and the sphere of whatever certainty is attainable by man; here he thought he was dealing with facts and was standing on a foundation of proved knowledge. In theology he believed he was still close to ascertainable truth, yet removed a step from the region of immediate experience. Mythology carried him further afield from positive assurance, though it might be indispensable as the expression, more or less symbolical, of necessary truths. The enlightened pagan might repudiate as vigorously as the Christian the popular tales of the gods, but, if he was humble as well as enlightened, he would continue to admit that only through myth, purified of its extravagance, could

he lay hold of that enigmatical intercourse between the human and the divine on which the vigour of the religious life is largely dependent. Perhaps no pagan understood this function of the imagination better than Maximus of Tyre, a preacher of Platonism in the days of Commodus. "All things," he says, "are full of mystery (*ainigmatôn*), both in the poets and in the [ancient] philosophers. And for my part I like rather their spirit of reverence towards the truth than the boldness of the moderns. For of matters dimly perceived by human weakness the more becoming interpreter is mythology."<sup>17</sup>

The mind of the Christian moved in the opposite direction. With him, so long at least as he remained orthodox, what the pagan called mythology was the starting point of religion and the field of certainty. The incarnation, with the whole economy of salvation, he regarded as a verifiable historical event, in which the imagination had no part; unless this fact were nakedly and objectively true his faith was vain and his preaching a lie. Symbolism for him entered with theology; and though he might be ready to perish for his conception of the Trinity, he would not deny that his terms for the relation of the three persons one to another were an inadequate translation into human speech of truths that surpassed

<sup>17</sup> *Philosophoumena* iv, 5A.

mortal comprehension. In a way his theological definitions were admittedly more symbolical than the Platonist's. The divergence becomes again complete when we pass to philosophy. Here, where the Platonist thought he could move securely if anywhere, the Christian, so far as he distinguished philosophy from revelation, saw only the blind groping of a ruined intelligence, which, unaided by divine Grace, might catch a glimpse, afar off and shrouded in clouds and thick darkness, of its true home, but in the end must sink into doubt and despair.

The full significance of this revolution of direction within what is essentially the same circle of religious experience will be better understood after we have completed our examination of Platonism and Christianity. For the present some intimation of its nature may be conveyed by setting side by side certain words of Socrates and a passage from one of the Fathers. "A life without criticism, or reflection on its meaning, is unworthy of a man," says Socrates in the *Apology*; and more than once he declares that the only thing worth while is to pass one's days conversing about the great problems of conduct and discussing the definitions of good and evil. This is the approach to religion by way of philosophy; it was Plato's way. With it may be compared a characteristic saying of St. Basil in one of his let-

ters: "For if to live for us is Christ, it follows that our conversation ought to be about Christ, our thought and our conduct should hang upon his commands and our soul should be formed in his likeness."<sup>18</sup> That is the mythological approach to religion, the way of the Christian. How conscious the ancient writers themselves were of the diversity of the two ways, we may learn from the common accusation brought against the Christians that their rule was, "Do not investigate, only believe." Origen, who quotes the charge and comments on it,<sup>19</sup> could indeed show by way of retort that the pagan philosopher also was impelled to his initial choice of philosophy by something resembling an unreasoning act of faith. His reply would have been more effective here, if, as in many other passages of his works, he had insisted that at least the Platonist among pagans and the Christian, though starting from opposite poles and moving in contrary directions, were still traversing the same road through the same broad land of religious faith.

Our present purpose is to examine the attitude of Plato to the three components of religion. It

<sup>18</sup> *Epistola clix* (Migne).

<sup>19</sup> *Philocalia* xviii, 1 (*Contra Celsum* i, 9): Μὴ ἐξέταζε, ἀλλὰ πίστευσον. See Greg. Thaum., *In Orig.* 14, for the application of this to Origen's method of teaching. Socrates had said, *Apology* 38A: Ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ.

will appear that not the smallest of his merits as a religious writer is the clearness with which he holds to the distinction between philosophy and theology, and between theology and mythology, while at the same time he sees how they flow one into the other to form a single body of spiritual life.

## CHAPTER II

### PHILOSOPHY

TRANSLATION FROM *THE REPUBLIC*, BOOK II

[The first book of *The Republic* had been concerned mainly with a refutation of the Nietzschean theory upheld by Thrasymachus, that natural justice is merely the right of the stronger to grasp what he can. In the opening paragraphs of the second book, which here follow in translation, the central thesis of the whole dialogue is set forth by Glaucon and Adeimantus, the young brothers of Plato, who demand from Socrates a positive exposition of his own creed that it is better, under all circumstances, to be just than to be unjust.]

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*Glauco loquitur*: I wish now you would listen to me too, and see whether you agree with me. For in my opinion Thrasymachus succumbed to you, like a charmed snake, sooner than he ought, and your demonstration of justice and injustice does not yet satisfy my mind. I desire still to hear what they actually are and how they operate in the soul, each considered by itself and with no regard to its rewards and results. With your consent, therefore, I will proceed thus: taking up



the argument from the point of view of Thrasy-machus, first I shall state the nature and origin of justice in accordance with the views of these men; secondly, I shall show that all those who practise justice, practise it as a necessity, not as a good, and, thirdly, I shall contend that their attitude is reasonable, since, as they say, the life of the unjust is far preferable to the life of the just. Not, of course, that this is my own view; but I am perplexed by the words of Thrasy-machus and a thousand others dinning in my ears, whereas to the present time I have never heard from any one the argument that shows how justice is preferable to injustice, as I should like to hear it—an encomium of justice, I mean, stripped of every accessory—and as I expect to hear it from you by your leave. To this end I shall exert myself to laud the unjust life, and my manner of speaking will show you how I wish to hear you censuring injustice and praising justice.

Now they say that in the nature of things to do injustice is a good and to suffer injustice is an evil, but that there is more of evil in suffering injustice than of good in doing it, and so when injustice is done and suffered and men have had a taste of both, those who are unable to escape the evil and take the good conclude that it is better to come to an understanding which shall put an end to one and the other. Hence the beginning of

laws and mutual covenants; hence that which the law ordains gets the name of lawful and just [as distinguished from what is just by nature], and this is the origin and essence of [so-called] justice, a compromise between the best state, wherein a man should do injustice without punishment, and the worst state, wherein he should suffer injustice without power to retaliate. And the just life, as a compromise between these two, is tolerated not as a good, but as having a certain honour from the common inability to pursue injustice. For no true man who had the ability to effect his will would ever enter into such a contract with another as would put an end to the practising along with the suffering of injustice; he would be mad to do so. This by common report is the nature of justice, and hence its origin.

And that those who practise justice do so involuntarily and by reason of impotence, we can learn very clearly by resorting to a little fiction. We will suppose that both men, the just and the unjust, have the liberty to do exactly as they please, and then we will follow them in imagination and see whither the desire of each leads him. So we shall catch the just man, red-handed so to speak, taking the same course as the unjust, led on by that inborn self-interest which nature inevitably pursues as a good, when it is not diverted by law and force into honouring equity. The

kind of liberty I have in mind for them is like the power which the story gives to Gyges, the progenitor of the Lydian line. They say he was a shepherd in the service of the king of Lydia, and that once in a great storm and earthquake the ground broke open and made a chasm where he was pasturing his flock. Amazed at the sight, he went down into the opening and beheld many marvels which are related in the story—among them a hollow horse of bronze, with doors through which, by peering in, he saw what appeared to be a dead body, but larger than an ordinary man. From this body he took nothing but a gold ring which was on its hand, and so reascended.

Afterwards when the shepherds held their monthly assembly to send their report to the king concerning the flocks, he came with the others, having the ring on his finger. And as he sat among them, he chanced to twist the collet of the ring to the inside of his hand; whereupon he became invisible to the rest of them, and they began to talk about him as if he had gone away. While he was wondering at this, he chanced to finger the ring again and to turn the collet out, and as he did so he reappeared. Observing this result, he went on to experiment with the ring to see whether it had such a power, and he found that when he turned it inwards he grew invisible, when outwards visible. With this discovery in mind

he took measures to be chosen one of the messengers to the court, and when he had come thither, seduced the queen, and with her help attacked and slew the king, and so made himself master of the crown.

Suppose now that there were two such rings, and that our just man wore one and our unjust man the other. I suspect you would find no man so adamantine that he would cling to justice and have the nerve to refrain from putting his hand on what was not his own, when it was in his power to lift whatever he liked from the market with impunity, and to enter a house and take his pleasure with any one he chose, and to kill and release from bonds at his good will, and in general to comport himself among men as though he were a god. In his actions he would differ in no respect from the other man, but both would be found pursuing the same end. Yet you would certainly regard this as evidence that no one is just by choice, but under compulsion, as deriving no benefit from such a state, since wherever any one thinks he has the liberty to be unjust, there he is unjust. And in fact all men believe at heart that injustice is far more profitable to them personally than justice, and believe rightly, as the party for whom I am arguing will say. For if any one with such liberty as we are supposing should refrain resolutely from injustice and never

lay hand on what was not his own, he would appear to lookers-on simply wretched and insensate, although publicly they might commend him and make a pretence of deceiving one another for fear of suffering injustice themselves. So much for our fiction.

Next let us turn to a direct judgment of the two lives. And we shall be able to make such a comparison fairly only by setting the most completely just man over against the most completely unjust man; and in no other way. And how is this contrast to be effected? I answer: from the unjust man we will take nothing that pertains to injustice, and from the just man nothing pertaining to justice, but will posit each as perfectly fitted for his own manner of life. In the first place, then, our rascal must have the address of a clever craftsman. For instance a consummate navigator or physician will distinguish between the practicable and the impracticable in his art, and will limit his undertakings accordingly; and if by chance he makes a slip, he still knows how to recover himself. In like manner our rascal, if he is to be consummate in his kind, must be successful in wrong-doing, and avoid detection, for to be found out is to be weak, and the height of injustice is to appear just without being so. Therefore I say that in the completely unjust man we must assume the most complete injustice.

There is to be no reservation; but we shall allow him, while performing the greatest acts of injustice to acquire for himself the greatest reputation for justice. If he falls into embarrassment, he shall be able to extricate himself, by adroitness of speech if any of his misdeeds have been informed against, by more forcible methods where force is required, being a fellow of audacity and energy and in command of friends and money. Then by the side of such an example let us set up for comparison the just man, in his noble simplicity, who desires, as Aeschylus says, not to seem but to be good.<sup>1</sup> Here must be no seeming; for if he shall seem to be just, honours and rewards will flow to him accordingly, and it will not be clear whether he is what he is for the sake of justice or for the sake of the rewards and honours. Strip him of everything save his righteousness, and make him in every respect the opposite of the other. Being perfectly innocent, let him seem in the eyes of mankind the most unjust of all, that his justice may be tested by the fire of infamy and its consequences. Let him not soften, but go on to the hour of death, through all his days appearing to be unjust but being just. Then indeed, when they stand at the summit, one of justice and the

<sup>1</sup>This is the famous line of the *Seven Against Thebes* (592) describing Amphiaraus, which, according to Plutarch, drew the eyes of all the spectators upon Aristides.

other of injustice, we can judge between them which is the happier.

The kind of life that awaits each of them is only too easy to describe. I am bound to go on with the story, and if my language sounds offensive, you will understand that the words are not really mine but belong to those who eulogize injustice as preferable to justice. They will tell you that the just man who is reputed unjust will be scourged and racked and bound, will have his eyes burnt out, and finally after all his torments will be impaled,<sup>2</sup> and so will learn that he ought not to aim at being but at seeming righteous. The sentiment of Aeschylus applies far more fitly to the unjust man; for in truth, they will say, it is he who, pursuing the

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<sup>2</sup> From an early date this passage was applied to the passion of Christ. Clement (*Strom.* V, xiv, 108) quotes the words and calls them virtually a prophecy of the Incarnation. The same view, to omit other references, is presented in a curious little book of the seventeenth century by Merick Casaubon, entitled: *Of Credulity and Incredulity; in Things Divine and Spiritual: Wherein, (among other things) a true and faithful account is given of the Platonick Philosophy, as it hath reference to Christianity.* "As for the Second," Casaubon says, "the manner of his death, I think there is no antient writer almost but hath it; and learned *Grotius*, in his observations upon *Matthew*; his judgment is, that (*non sine Divinae Providentiae instinctu*;) it was not without an instinct of Divine Providence, that Plato did write so. The passage is out of his Second Book *de Repub.* and goeth commonly, (that passage) under the notion or title *De crucifixione justi*, or, *of the crucifying of the just.*"

reality of things and not living with a view to appearances, desires not to seem unjust, but to be—

“From the deep furrow reaping in his mind  
The harvest of his counsels well-designed.”

And this is his harvest: first, to be a ruler in the city by reason of his reputation for justice, and then to marry whence he pleases and give in marriage to whom he pleases, do business and associate with whom he likes, and always to his own profit and advantage because he has no misgivings about the wrong. In any contest he enters, whether private or public, he will succeed and get the better of his rivals, and by this advantage will make himself rich and be in a position to help his friends and injure his enemies. And for the same reason his sacrifices and gifts to the gods will be appropriate and magnificent. And so serving the gods and the people of his choice better than any just man may, he naturally will be dear to heaven, dearer than the innocent. Thus, Socrates, they say that by the help of gods and men a better life is the portion of the unjust than of the just. . . .

365A *Adeimantus loquitur*: . . . Now, my dear Socrates, when a young soul hears all this talk about virtue and vice and the way honours are distributed by men and gods, what do you suppose he will do? I mean the young man who is clever



by nature and, like a bee on the wing, apt to flit about among the sentiments of men, and gather from them his own notion of the character and procedure that will carry him through life most prosperously. I think he is likely to repeat to himself the words of Pindar: “ ‘Whether by the straight path of justice or by the crooked ways of deceit ascending the loftier citadel,’<sup>3</sup> shall I fortify myself for living? Everywhere I hear it said that there is no profit for me in being just if I also seem unjust, but toil and pain and manifest loss, while an enchanting life is presented to me if, following injustice, I acquire the reputation of justice. Therefore since, as the wise inform me, ‘seeming masters truth’ and is lord of happiness, to seeming I will wholly turn. As a vestibule and front I must draw up about myself the pictured semblance of virtue, but behind them I will drag the subtle and shifty fox, as Archilochus, that great sage, recommends. ‘But it is not always easy,’ somebody will say, ‘to cover up one’s wickedness.’ Nor is any other of the great ventures a light matter, I should reply; nevertheless, if we are to be happy, the tracks of the argument point in this direction, and so we must proceed. To cover ourselves we will form secret societies and clubs; and there are the masters of persuasion to teach us the art of addressing assemblies and

<sup>3</sup> Fragment 213, Bergk.

courts, by which art, persuading where we cannot domineer, we shall contrive to avoid the penalties of overreaching. 'Still it is not possible to use concealment or force with the gods.' Very good. But if, on the one hand, there are no gods, or if they have no care for what mankind is doing, why should we trouble ourselves about concealment? And if, on the other hand, they do exist and have a care for men, yet all we know and have heard about them is from law and custom and from the genealogical tales of the poets, and from these we learn that they can be cajoled and diverted by 'sacrifice and soothing prayers' and offerings. We ought to accept the whole tradition or none of it. And if we accept it, then let us overreach as we will, and make sacrifice out of our profits. By justice we shall simply come off unscathed from the gods, while forgoing the profit of injustice; by injustice we shall have our gain and still, with our prayers and propitiations, shall come off unscathed through transgression and sin. 'But there is yet Hades, where we, and perhaps our children, must undergo judgment for our sins in this world.' And also, my friend," our fellow will reply, making his calculation, "there are the mysteries and the gods of redemption, and these have great power, as the mightiest cities declare, and as the poets, who are children

of the gods, and the prophets of the gods agree in proclaiming.”

What reason then remains that we should prefer justice to injustice of that great sort, whereby, if we combine it with a deceitful regard for appearances, we shall fare to our taste among gods and men, in this world and the next, as the majority of voices, and those not the least weighty, assure us? Considering all these arguments, Socrates, how can you expect to win honour for justice from any one endowed with superiority of soul or wealth or body or family, or expect aught but laughter when he hears it commended? And even the rare man, granted his existence, who can expose the falsity of these arguments and has a clear perception of the supremacy of justice, is quite ready to pardon, and forbears to be angry with the unjust; for he knows that nobody is just by choice, however by reason of timidity or old age or some other weakness he censures what he is impotent himself to accomplish—nobody at least save by virtue of a divine gift of nature which inspires him with disgust of wrong, or else by the acquisition of knowledge. This is clear. For let your pretender once acquire power, and he practises injustice to the best of his ability.

The cause of all this confusion, Socrates, was intimated by my brother and me at the beginning of the argument, when we declared our astonish-

367 ment that of all the professed panegyrists of justice, including yourself, from the earliest heroes of whom we know anything to the present race, not one has ever censured injustice or commended justice for anything except the reputation and honours and benefits that pertain to them. But as for the intrinsic operation of each in the soul which harbours it, hidden from the sight of gods and men, no one has ever yet described this adequately in verse or prose, or shown that of all the evils which the soul possesses in itself injustice is the worst, whereas justice is the greatest good. Had this been the train of reasoning adopted by you moralists from the beginning and your manner of instructing us from childhood, we should not now be guarding one another against injustice, but each would be his own best guardian, fearful lest by wrong-doing he should attach to himself the greatest evil.

These, and doubtless more of the sort, would be the pleas of Thrasymachus or his fellows in regard to justice and injustice. It is all a gross perversion of the true nature of things, as I am bound to think; but, to confess my purpose frankly, I have put the matter as strongly as possible in the desire of hearing the other side from you. I beg you not to stop with asserting the mere superiority of justice over injustice, but do you demonstrate the immediate effect of each

upon its possessor, by which one is essentially an evil thing and the other a good thing. And, as Glaucon insisted, do not argue on the basis of reputation and appearance. Unless you suppress what rightly belongs to each in this respect, and grant what is false, we shall retort that you are lauding not justice but its appearance, and that your censure is not for being but for seeming unjust; which is tantamount to bidding us practise injustice if we can avoid detection. We shall say that you really agree with Thrasy-machus in regarding justice as another man's good, the interest of the stronger, and injustice as one's own interest and advantage, though injurious to the weaker. Since then you have admitted that justice belongs to that highest class of goods, which are desirable to possess for their consequences and still more for themselves, like seeing, hearing, wisdom, and health, and whatever else is vitally good in its own nature rather than in appearance, I will ask you now to direct your panegyric to this one point. Show how of itself justice brings a blessing to the possessor, whereas injustice harms him, and leave to others the commendation of rewards and appearances. I might be content to hear others praising justice and censuring injustice in that way, magnifying the appearances and rewards of one and the other; but not you, unless you so bid me, since

this is a subject you have spent your whole life in considering, this and no other. Do not stop then with asserting the mere superiority of justice over injustice, but demonstrate the immediate effect of each upon its possessor, whereby, whether hidden or not from gods and men, one is essentially a good thing and the other an evil thing.

## CHAPTER III

### PHILOSOPHY: JUSTICE AND THE SOUL

What religion in the most general sense meant to Plato he has expressed in a memorable passage of the *Theaetetus*:

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“But it is not possible that evils should cease to be—since by reason of necessity there must always be something contrary to the good—neither can they have their seat among the gods, but of necessity they haunt mortal nature and this region of ours. Wherefore our aim should be to escape hence to that other world with all speed. And the way of escape is by becoming like to God in so far as we may. And the becoming like is in becoming just and holy by taking thought. . . . God is never in any wise unjust, but most perfectly just, and there is nothing more like to him than one of us who should make himself just to the limit of man’s power.”

That is an idea on which Plato was fond of dwelling, and which never after was to leave the Greek consciousness. Its echo will be found everywhere in the pagan Platonists of a later age. It is the substance of the Plotinian ethics; and in Maximus of Tyre, to mention only one of the

lesser lights, it lends point and gravity to a finely conceived little sermon on friendship.<sup>1</sup> For the Christian the idea easily connected itself with the statement of Genesis that man was made in the likeness of God, and with the command of Jesus to do good to them that hate us that we may become like to our Father in heaven; and in this form, sometimes dressed in the exact phraseology of Plato, it permeates the whole course of Christian literature.<sup>2</sup>

Now it is sufficiently clear that this conception of *homoiôsis* (becoming like to God), as the central fact to Plato of the religious life, involves both theology and mythology, involves, that is to say, both the knowing of what God is and the bringing together of God and man. But at this point the more important matter to consider is the part taken in it by philosophy. If we should say that the answer to this question depends on

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophoumena* xxxv, 2D: "How then should men become like to God? By imitating that in him which is preservative and friendly and paternal. This is a mortal likeness to divine virtue, which among the gods is called right and justice and by other mystical and godlike names, and among men is called friendship and graciousness and by other kindly and human names."

<sup>2</sup> It appears in the first of the Apostolic Fathers (I Clement xxxiii); it is a constant thought of Chrysostom (*e.g.* *In Mat.* 238B, 239A). Perhaps the most notable passage is that in which Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* II, xix, xx), taking the words of the *Theaetetus* as his text, so expounds them as to merge Platonism and Christianity in one beautiful blend.



whether we hold the becoming just to precede logically the becoming like to God or the contrary, we might seem to be indulging in a verbal quibble; yet in truth it is on precisely such a distinction that the difference between the religious procedure of Platonism and Christianity turns. We become like the gods by becoming just, Plato says; and in the same way we become dear to the gods, since like, as the proverb runs, is always dear to like. Very good; but what is the relation between justice and the divine nature? Is justice that which God wills, or does God will that which is just? Is justice dear to Him because it is His will, or does He will justice because it is dear to Him? Is the conception of justice and holiness prior in our minds to our conception of God, or is our conception of God prior to the conception of justice and holiness? That is a question first raised by Plato, and from that day to this it has not ceased to trouble the current of theological thinking; its answer, determining whether philosophy or theology and mythology shall guide and dominate religion, is fraught with momentous consequences.

Lysis 214b

Suppose a Christian and a Platonist confronted by the dilemma presented in the sceptical philosophy of Sextus Empiricus:

“Again, if the divine exists, either it has virtue or it has not. If it has not, then the divine is a

poor and wretched thing,—an absurd conclusion. If it has, then there will be something greater, or higher, than God; for as the virtue of a horse is greater, or higher, than the horse itself, and as the virtue of man is greater, or higher, than the possessor, in the same way the virtue of God will be greater, or higher, than God himself. But if it is greater, or higher, than God, evidently God, as deficient in nature, will be a poor thing and subject to corruption. But if there is no middle term between these opposites, and God cannot be seen to fall under either of them, then we must say that God is not.”<sup>3</sup>

From the horns of this dilemma the Christian would escape by denying that either “has” or “has not” is applicable to the relation of God to virtue; virtue will be whatever God *is*, He does not possess but is the source of virtue. The logical position of Christianity, however individual theologians may have wavered in their judgment, is to make justice and holiness depend on the fiat of God; a thing is right because God so commands.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Adv. Physicos* i, 176.

<sup>4</sup> As a matter of fact Christian theologians have not been consistent on this point. So, for instance, Jonathan Edwards, as an extreme Calvinist, leads the good and evil of the world logically up to God’s arbitrary decree that such should be, yet he bases the righteousness of that decree on God’s choice of “the moral good which He sees” (upon a principle, that is, outside of and superior to God’s being), and on an aboriginal distinction “between different objects that are proposed to the Divine Understanding.” (See *Shelburne Essays* XI, 59.)

Plato, on the contrary, virtually throws himself upon the second horn of the dilemma, though he would repudiate vehemently the inference that because God is in any way deficient He should therefore be held a poor thing or subject to corruption. At least in the *Timaeus*, as we shall see when we come to consider Plato's mythology, he sets the ultimate source of good and evil outside of the divine nature, evil being below God, and good in a way, as that which He imitates in the act of creation, above God.

This question touching the primacy of the moral law or of the divine will is raised only indirectly in the *Timaeus*. In the *Euthyphro* it is put categorically as a matter fundamental to ethics and religion, but is left without clear answer. The solution, Plato implies, can be reached only when we have learned what justice in itself is, and to the solving of this problem he devotes the long dialogue of *The Republic*, to which the *Euthyphro*, together with the *Gorgias*, serves as a kind of preface. The problem is stated with the utmost precision and emphasis in the introductory paragraphs of the second book of *The Republic*, a translation of which is given in the preceding chapter. In the tenth book of the *Laws*, where Plato unfolds his great theological argument, the controversy will be directed against those who deny the existence of the gods, or, ad-

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mitting their existence, reject their providential government of man, or believe they can be reconciled to man's evil-doing by bribery. These three theses he will lay down explicitly as the basis of theology: the being of the gods, the Providence of the gods, and their inexorable justice. Now, in the exordium to the argument of *The Republic*, he isolates the problem of philosophy by a hypothetical denial of just these three theses.<sup>5</sup> "Therefore," so the supposition runs, "if on the one hand there are no gods, or if they have no care for what mankind is doing, why should we trouble ourselves about concealment? And if, on the other hand, they do exist and have a care for men, yet all we know and have heard about them is from law and custom and from the genealogical tales of the poets, and from these we learn that they can be cajoled and diverted by 'sacrifice and soothing prayers' and offerings." Thus the task set before Socrates is to discover the nature of justice (righteousness, that is, or essential morality) in itself, and to determine whether it is better to pursue justice for its own sake apart from all

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<sup>5</sup> I cannot understand the frame of mind of Rohde (see *Psyche* II, 265 note) and other scholars who take these passages as evidence that at one time Plato did not believe in the immortality of the soul, and first introduced the belief paradoxically in the tenth book. It should seem that the hypothetical nature of the denial was sufficiently emphasized to forestall any such interpretation.

external rewards in this world and the next. To this end Socrates and his friends compare the perfectly just man with the perfectly unjust man; and in order that all disturbing complications may be eliminated they imagine the just man subjected to the many physical ills of life and burdened with the reputation of injustice, whereas the unjust man shall enjoy every sort of physical comfort and all the honours awarded to the appearance of probity and magnanimity. They go further, and suppose, for the sake of the argument, that there are no gods at all or no Providence, or that, like men, the gods, if they exist, can be cheaply hoodwinked. It is not easy to see how the central problem of philosophy could be severed more absolutely from every theological and mythological disturbance, or how the law of righteousness could be set up more unmistakably as a consideration prior to the being and nature of God. One thing is manifest, that for Plato in philosophy, thus regarded, religion has its true beginning and finds its desired assurance. Here, in the knowledge of a truth which has its own immediate sanction, rests in the last resort our hope of spiritual peace; whatever follows, and much of deep importance is to follow, is but complementary, receding further and further into the shadows of uncertainty and conjecture as we proceed outwards from this central illumination.

What then is this justice, or righteousness, so desirable in itself? The arguments on which Plato bases his answer to this question, the very heart indeed of what is meant by Platonism, I have attempted to expound in the volume introductory to the present series, and shall not repeat here. But as to the quality of justice, if it can be defined by any single term, it is by the word *measure*,—the outcome of that last, undiscovered force within a man, which acts as a check and stay upon the restless, imperious, tumultuous impulses and desires and emotions ever swelling out of the dark background of life, a force which, itself unseen, brings order out of disorder, proportion out of excess, balance out of discord, peace out of agony, out of the unmeasured measure. Plato's doctrine of justice is in fact a compendium of the results of what Greek thought had come to be in the pre-Socratic age; and from Plato it was passed on to Aristotle, who builds on it a systematic scheme of ethics as determined by the law of the golden mean, and a system of metaphysics as determined by the law of form.

If justice is this inner law of measure, balance, health, how shall its attainment be known; what is the mark by which its possession is made manifest? Here again we perceive the diverging ways of religion as it starts from mythology or from philosophy. For the religious man whose faith

is founded primarily on mythology there is no certainty in the life of righteousness save in the judgment to come—

“As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.”

Without this expected reversal of the conditions of the actual world there is no moral law; right and wrong, justice and injustice, are but empty names; we live under clouds of confusion and ignorance beyond which rides no sun. For the Christian our existence must ever be a state of hope nourished by belief in the particular myth of Christ's redeeming act of sacrifice, and if we are deceived in this belief, then are we, as St. Paul says, “of all men most miserable.”<sup>6</sup> Newman is not afraid to put the condition even more emphatically:

“Our duty as Christians lies in this, in making ventures for eternal life without absolute certainty of success. . . . If then faith be the essence of a Christian life, and if it be what I have now described, it follows that our duty lies in risking upon Christ's word what we have, for what we have not; and doing so in a noble, generous way, not indeed rashly or lightly, still without knowing accurately what we are doing, not knowing either what we give up, nor again what we shall gain; uncertain about our reward, uncertain

<sup>6</sup> I Corinthians xv, 19.

about our extent of sacrifice, in all respects leaning, waiting upon Him, trusting in Him to fulfil His promise, trusting in Him to enable us to fulfil our own vows, and so in all respects proceeding without carefulness or anxiety about the future.”<sup>7</sup>

I am not holding a brief against Christianity, nor, as I have said before, have I any intention of prejudicing the case by the use of the word “myth.” My purpose here is simply to draw out the difference between the two approaches to the religious life. For it was exactly the hypothesis of Plato that this judgment to come should be eliminated, and that by an exaggeration of the apparent confusions of this life the difficulty of determining right and wrong should be faced without flinching. His method has at least the merit of boldness. Let the man assumed to be just suffer all the ills that should seem to belong to injustice, let the man assumed to be unjust enjoy the advantages that should seem to belong to justice, yet one sign nevertheless the man himself has, one infallible criterion, to know his own state, viz. the inner sense, now and immediate, of happiness or misery. And this inner sense, Plato declares, is so much more significant than all external conditions that the pursuit of justice is preferable at any cost; so far do the awards of

<sup>7</sup> *Parochial and Plain Sermons* IV, xx. Compare Pascal's *pari*.



conscience outweigh whatever the emotions and physical senses can give, that any man who has learned to distinguish his own feelings need have no hesitancy in determining the general path of righteousness and in preferring that path to every other. Clement of Alexandria summed up the essence of Platonism in a memorable sentence: "Plato himself says that happiness (*eudaimonia*) is the well-being of the daemon, and that by the daemon is meant the governing element of the soul, and that the most perfect and fullest good is this happiness."<sup>8</sup> And the same definition of Plato's *summum bonum* was given by the great sceptic, who then seeks to undermine its basis as follows:

"This is as much as to say that, in order to comprehend human happiness (*eudaimonia*), we must first have a conception of God and daemon, and in order to comprehend God, we must first have a conception of the happy man (*eudaimonos anthrôpou*). Therefore the conception of each depends upon the conception of the other, and both are inconceivable."<sup>9</sup>

The argument is cleverly turned; but, however it might apply to Christian theology, it has no bearing upon Plato's philosophy. The daemon involved in the Platonic conception of happiness

<sup>8</sup> *Stromata* II, xxii, 131.

<sup>9</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Physicos* i, 47.

is not to be taken as a power outside of our immediate experience, but as emphatically a power of the soul, as the very soul. The knowledge of the daemon and the knowledge of happiness are one and the same act of self-knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

Philosophy then may be defined to be the soul's discovery of itself, as an entity having a law and interests of its own apart from and above all this mixed and incomprehensible life of the body. That I take it—the soul's deep content in the recognition of itself—is the beginning of the Platonic religion and, if not the beginning, certainly the consummation of Christianity. I would say it was the essential matter of all religion, were it not for the strange phenomenon of a great oriental faith which has succeeded in preaching the doctrine of salvation and happiness without it. In one of the most interesting historically of the Buddhist books we have the report of a conversation between Menander (Milinda, in the Pâli), a Greek king of the Punjab in the second century B. C., and the saint Nâgasena on this very topic,

<sup>10</sup> Sallust, a friend of the Emperor Julian, was recalling this thesis of philosophy, though his words were not quite such as Plato would have chosen, when he said: "The souls of the good return purified back to the gods; and even were this not so, yet would virtue itself and the pleasure and glory of virtue, the life without pain or master, suffice for the happiness of the virtuous" (*De Diis et Mundo* 21, as abridged by Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen* V, 667).

with the result that the Greek, not well fortified, it must be admitted, in dialectic, is driven to assent to a purely nominalistic argument against the existence of the soul as an individual entity. And the same conclusion is drawn in various passages of other books, as, for instance, in these words of the *Visuddhi-Magga*:

“Just as the word ‘chariot’ is but a mode of expression for axle, wheels, chariot-body, pole, and other constituent members, placed in a certain relation to each other, but when we come to examine the members one by one, we discover that in the absolute sense there is no chariot; and just as the word ‘house’ is but a mode of expression for wood and other constituents of a house, surrounding space in a certain relation, but in the absolute sense there is no house; . . . in exactly the same way the words ‘living entity’ and ‘Ego’ are but a mode of expression for the presence of the five attachment groups, but when we come to examine the elements of being one by one, we discover that in the absolute sense there is no living entity there to form a basis for such figments as ‘I am,’ or ‘I’; in other words, that in the absolute sense there is only name and form. The insight of him who perceives this is called knowledge of the truth.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> H. C. Warren, *Buddhism in Translations* 133. See also E. W. Hopkins, *The Religions of India* 335.—A like nominalistic dissection of the soul is placed by Plato in the mouth of Diotima

To Buddha, with his settled abhorrence of anything savouring of metaphysical entities, the question of the soul, when he is pressed for an answer, is simply brushed aside as one not tending to edification; only this he will pronounce as a certainty, that the effects of a man's deeds are unescapable in this life and endure after him as the condition of a new life, so that it behooves us to strive earnestly for righteousness.<sup>12</sup> In other words Buddha taught the doctrine of *Karma*, the inevitable law of cause and effect in the moral order, rather than metempsychosis as we understand it. Yet withal the fact that a man may recover the memory of past lives shows that even for him these successive existences are in some way strung together on a thread of consciousness, however useless and disturbing it may be to discuss the nature of this binding thread.

Whatever weight we may give to this oriental view, certainly to Socrates the mission of the philosopher was to preach just this doctrine of the soul as a living entity with its own rights and its own law. When he stood before the court of

(*Symposium* 207D ff). But Plato leaves the desire of immortality by succession of father and son and by propagation of virtue in others as a spur to noble actions. And in the end this immortality by succession is shown to be only an image of the true immortality, which belongs to the individual by reason of his contemplation of the eternal Ideas. After all the soul *is*.

<sup>12</sup> *Majjhima-Nikâya* Sutta 63.

Athens to defend himself as the true Athenian, he spoke the message once for all for our western world:

“While there is breath to me and I am able I will not cease from the life of philosophy, neither will I desist from admonishing you. And whomsoever of you I meet, with him will I argue as my wont is and say to him: My good friend, you who belong to Athens, this city great and glorious for wisdom and power, are you not ashamed that your life is given up to the winning of much money and reputation and rank, while for wisdom and truth and the good of your own soul you care not and have no concern? And if he disputes and asserts his care for these things, I will not quickly let him go or leave him, but will question and examine him and put him to the proof; and if then he seems to claim a virtue which he does not possess, I will rebuke him because the things of most value he little esteems, but prizes those of meaner worth. . . . For this, I assure you, is the command of the god; and I think no greater blessing has ever befallen you in the city than this my service to the god. For I do nothing else but go about persuading you, young and old, not to take thought first for your bodies and for money, but more diligently to consider the good of your own souls.”

Such at least are the words put into the mouth of Socrates by one who was present at the trial,

and there can be little doubt that they indicate faithfully the source of his power. In a letter to Themistius the Emperor Julian, who almost at the close of our period sought to revive the old pagan faith, not understanding that Christianity was the most legitimate heir of what was best in it, wrote:

“The achievements of Alexander the Great are outdone in my eyes by Socrates son of Sophroniscus. It is to him I ascribe the wisdom of Plato, the fortitude of Antisthenes, the generalship of Xenophon, the Eretriac and Megaric philosophies, with Cebes, Simmias, Phaedo, and countless others. To him too we owe the colonies that they planted, the Lyceum, the Stoa, and the Academies. Who ever found salvation in the victories of Alexander? . . . Whereas it is thanks to Socrates that all who find salvation in philosophy are being saved even now.”<sup>13</sup>

It was because Plato alone of all Socrates' disciples felt the full weight of his spiritual affirmation, and saw that it was not contradicted by the Socratic scepticism or endangered by the Socratic rationalism, but received confirmation from them—for this reason Plato became the true spokesman of the Greek Tradition, whereas the other disciples of Socrates are known to us rather

<sup>13</sup> Quoted by Professor Burnet in *The Socratic Doctrine of the Soul*.

as the heads of schools, the schismatics and heresiarchs of philosophy so to speak.

Philosophy then, as Plato understood it, leads first of all to an obvious distinction between soul and body. Yet this is not the whole story; indeed it is fair to say that much of the pseudo-Platonism of a later age, especially as it took the form of a crass asceticism, may be traced to a failure to carry Plato's dualism to its genuine source. For with Plato the deeper meaning of the search for righteousness lay not in a mechanical division between soul and body, but in a sense of division within the soul itself. We shall have occasion to study the relation of this psychic dualism to the connexion of soul and body more fully when we come to our exposition of the mythology of the *Timaeus*; it will be sufficient here to point to the notable passage of the tenth book of *The Republic* in which Socrates contends that the real evil of the soul is nothing external to its nature, not a property of the body, but a quality of the soul itself, working within the soul its own perversion and misery. This is the thought carried out in that eloquent diatribe on the honour and dishonour of the soul, which introduces the fifth book of the *Laws*: "To every man his all is dual. To the stronger and better things pertains mastery, to the lesser and baser servitude; wherefore

608D ff.

726

always a man should honour the master parts of himself above the servile.”

The dualism of the soul itself could not be expressed more categorically than in these passages; nevertheless it is in immediate sequence to the clear statement of *The Republic* just quoted that Plato introduces the well-known simile of Glaucus, the sea-god. As the body of Glaucus was scarcely recognizable by reason of the overgrowth of shells and weeds clinging about it, and by reason of the mangling and distortion it had suffered from the waves, so we see the soul befouled by its association with the body and misshapen by the other evils that hang upon it. Yet not thus ought we to regard it, but should look thither, to its philosophy, and consider its higher contacts and what purer intercourse it desires, as being in its essence related to the divine and eternal, and should contemplate it as it may be when drawn by its innate aspiration out of this sea in which it is now immersed, and when beaten free, so to speak, of these earthy and savage accoutrements that grow upon it amidst its so-called blessed revellings. Then indeed we should know the soul as it truly is, not as we seem to know it through the passions of this human life.

There is, let us acknowledge, an inconsistency, unless we choose to call it a mere imperfection of terminology, to be reckoned with here. At one



time, as in the famous image of the chariot, Plato speaks of the soul as "composite," having within itself a faculty which reaches upwards to the divine, and a power also which pulls it downwards to the baser contaminations of the flesh; at another time he defines it as "incomposite" and akin by its very simplicity to what is unchanging and incorruptible. The fact is that Plato is here brought up against the insoluble paradox of the dualism of human nature, the same paradox which in Christianity was to be stated mythologically in the dogma of the one person and two natures of Christ.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes our real personality seems to reside in that portion of our being which is divine and uncontaminated by the world, in the soul, that is to say, considered apart from

Phaedrus  
246A

Phaedo 78c

<sup>14</sup> Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Platon* II, 220: "Eine Entscheidung gibt Platon nicht, sagt vielmehr ausdrücklich [*Republic*] 612A εἴτε πολυειδῆς εἴτε μονοειδῆς." The same uncertainty will be found in St. Paul, who at one time contrasts πνεῦμα, "spirit," and σὰρξ, "flesh," and at another time alters this opposition to one of "spirit" and ψυχή, "soul." He differs from Plato normally in regarding the "spirit" as a power introduced into man from above rather than as an integral part of man; yet again he becomes Platonic when he writes of the man's self, his ego, torn between these two contending powers, as neither "spirit" alone nor "soul" (or "flesh") alone, but somehow as both of these at once. At the end of our period the same ambiguity will be found in Chrysostom. I cannot see that the modern study of psychology has brought us one whit nearer to the elucidation of this mystery. We are one, and we are two; and this is all that dualism ventures to pronounce.

the body and the contacts with phenomena, while at other times we are more conscious of a division of our being which opens down into the depths of personality. But withal the "philosophy of the soul" is to strive to behold it in its purer essence, stripped and cleansed of its muddy vestments, however these may be conceived. That is justice, when by a complete self-knowledge a man has become master of himself (or "better than himself," *kreittôn hautou*, as the phrase runs with a significant and beautiful ambiguity); that is happiness, *eudaimonia*, when there is no longer a hostile division of the powers within the soul, like to faction within a city, but a measured harmony and the unity of subordination.

The next step in Plato's religion, the question of the soul's immortality, carries us to the borderland between philosophy and theology; for in the Greek Tradition, from the beginning to the end, life beyond the grave was closely associated with the being and nature of deity. In Homeric times the chief distinction between gods and men was that the former lived forever in a light where the shadow of death did not fall, whereas the human soul, after its brief appearance on earth, passed to a region of gloom, where, if it could be said to exist at all, it was as an insubstantial wraith, like the images that flit through our minds in the dreams of sleep. And in later days, among

pagan and Christian alike, to say that the soul survived in the full enjoyment of its powers was equivalent to calling it divine; to be endowed with immortality and to be deified were almost synonymous terms.<sup>15</sup> It is therefore quite in the order of Greek thought that one of Plato's most elaborate arguments for the duration of the soul as the ultimate source of motion should have been directed to prove the being of God.<sup>16</sup> In discussing the question of immortality we are still in the province of philosophy in so far as the appeal is to the soul's knowledge of itself. But the evidence is of another sort; like the evidence for the existence of the gods, it is less immediate and positive, more dependent on the colder conclusions of reason, than in the case of the great ethical thesis of *The Republic*.

There are three main demonstrations of immortality in the Dialogues. One of these is the aforesaid argument of the *Laws* for the soul and for God as self-moving entities and so logically and temporally antecedent to the chain of mechanical motion. Here the future existence of the soul, its immortality in the common meaning

<sup>15</sup> So Lucian, quoting Heraclitus, says (*Vitarum Auctio* 14): Τί δαὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι; Θεοὶ θνητοί. Τί δαὶ οἱ θεοί; Ἄνθρωποι ἀθάνατοι. And Clement, in his sermon *Quis Dives Salvetur* 19, speaks of spiritual wealth as θεοποιὸν καὶ ζωῆς χορηγὸν αἰωνίου.

<sup>16</sup> See *post* in the translation of *Laws* x.

245c ff. of the word, is left to be implied from its prenatal eternity, but in the *Phaedrus* the same argument from the soul's faculty of self-motion is extended explicitly in both directions. All that we call soul, it is there said, is immortal, since it contains within itself the principle of continuity. That which moves another and is itself moved by another will have rest from life as it has rest from motion; but that which is self-moved, as it has no reason to abandon itself, ceases not to move, and is the source and principle of motion for all other things that move. Such a source and principle is without beginning, itself the beginning of all things that come to be. For if it began, that from which it began would be the source and principle. And as it is without beginning, so it must be without end; since if the source failed, there would be nothing from which it or anything else should come into being, and all would be nothing. Neither therefore can it perish nor come into being, or all the world would come to a standstill and fall together, having no source of motion or existence. All material bodies that have their motion from without are lifeless, that is to say soulless; all that have their motion from within and from themselves are possessed of a living soul. So it is we say that soul, and soul alone, is without beginning or end, without birth or death.

This may be called the first demonstration; the second, given in the tenth book of *The Republic*, is closely akin to it. Everything in nature perishes by its own evil, not by the evil that pertains to something else. Thus, if a man's body perishes, it does so by reason of its own disease. The disease may have been brought on by corrupt food, but the corruption of the food is nothing to us unless there is some weakness in the body itself which lays it open to infection. The vice or evil inherent in each thing, and that alone, is the true cause of its destruction; and if anything can be found which shows corruption yet is not dissolved or destroyed by that corruption, such a nature will be exempt from dissolution and death. But just this is found to be true of the soul. Its evil, like its good, is its own, a moral attribute rooted in its self-motion, and distinct from evil in any other form. And moral evil has this peculiarity, that it does not, as does the body's evil to the body, waste or destroy that in which it occurs. So far from consuming the soul, injustice and the other vices seem often to increase its activity, just as the nature of all desire is to expand indefinitely. Hence we argue that the soul, as it does not perish by its own evil, is not mortal, like all things material, but lives forever.

The third demonstration is that which occupied the minds of the little Socratic band during

the last memorable day in gaol, as recorded in the *Phaedo*. The arguments put into the mouth of Socrates, and probably reproducing in the main his actual conversation (though Plato admits that he himself, owing to illness, was not present), are too long to be considered here in detail. Briefly, however, we may observe that they follow three lines, which may be designated as the physical, the Ideal, and the metaphysical.

The first of these applies to the soul the theory which in physical science is known as the conservation of energy. It proceeds much as does the argument from motion in the *Phaedrus*. As there is change in material phenomena, one thing passing into another or one state into another, but with no loss or accretion to the sum of existing energy; so in psychical phenomena life springs from death and death from life with endless alternation. If this were not so, and that which died did not return to life, or that which was born did not suffer death, then the sum of life would soon be exhausted or would be extended beyond measure, instead of remaining a fixed quantity. Hence life and death are only alternations in the continuity of soul. As for the third, the metaphysical argument, it is of the same nature and has about the same exasperating elusiveness as the ontological proof of the existence of God. If you define God as being,

then God must be; so, if you define soul as life, then it must live, and as soul cannot perish. There is in fact not much satisfaction in either the physical or the metaphysical form of demonstration. So far as they have any validity, they merely prove the continued existence in the world of something which we may agree to call soul, while of the nature of that entity, or of your immortality or of mine in any sense of the word worthy of discussion, they say nothing.

But the argument from Ideas, which forms the heart and centre of the whole dialogue, is not to be thus lightly dismissed. This has a validity of another sort, a source of conviction which lies deeper than the logic of words, and which has set the *Phaedo* by the side of the Bible as one of the indispensable and inexhaustible documents of our religion.

Talking with his friends under the shadow of death which will descend upon him with the setting of the sun, talking while the sunlight is still upon the hills, Socrates asks if they are not aware of two lives that divide their interest: one the life involved in the urgent needs of the body, a network of desires which can never be really satisfied, reaching after pleasures inextricably bound up with pain and leaving the heart uneasy whether fulfilled or unfulfilled, brief and ephem-

eral at best,<sup>17</sup> at the worst terrible and devastating; the other life turned to the thought of eternal values, under whose impulsion we cease to demand the satisfaction of beauty from things which are forever clouded with uncertainty and may even conceal temptations to embrace ugliness, or to demand the satisfaction of righteousness from deeds which can never be judged apart from the perplexity of consequences, and set our heart on those spiritual laws—or powers, let us say—which are the source of attraction in whatever appears beautiful and the impelling motive in whatever is done for righteousness' sake, and which we think we might see in themselves as radiant entities, somewhere and somehow, with other eyes than those of the body, if only we could escape from the limitations and hindrances of mortality. This is the great bargain of philosophy, the exchange of the desire towards what is ephemeral and subject to mutation for the hope, to be perfectly fulfilled in some other existence, of what is deathless and immutable. The hope is within the choice of any man, and if the hope is earnest it soon, by a process which can be verified in experience, passes into a certainty of belief.

<sup>17</sup> This becomes the traditional ground of rejecting pleasure as a "good." So Maximus Tyrius xxxi, 1b: Οὕτως καὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ εἴ τις ἀφέλοι τὴν ἀκρίβειαν καὶ τὴν στάσιν, συναφείλεν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν φύσιν.



Hence philosophy is a kind of study of death, not in a morbid or rebellious sense, though to Socrates, now waiting for the fateful summons, some unusual emphasis of asceticism may be allowed, but as a preparation for the departure some day in peace and good cheer. Rather, we might say that philosophy is not so much a study of death as of deathlessness, and a search for the signs of eternity in the objects of time. And what then if it should happen to any man in that search to get glimpses of beauty itself or of righteousness itself, pure, untainted, unmixed, not as we know them by symbols and tokens in the flesh and in the petty paraphernalia of mortality, but in the singleness of their divine nature? Should you call it a mean condition to keep the eye of the soul raised to that vision and to live in communion with it? If you reflect, you will say that such a man will bring forth no illusory images of virtue but the realities of righteousness, as is meet for one who has wedded himself to the very truth; and his immortality will not be that of those who seek to prolong a kind of vicarious existence in the generations of their children, nor the mere hope of some future state of blessedness, but the present possession of one who has grown like and dear to God.<sup>18</sup> The hope and the present assur-

<sup>18</sup> The argument is reproduced for Christians by Origen in his *Exhortatio ad Martyrium* 47: "Ἐτι δὲ καὶ φιλοζωεῖ ἄνθρωπος, πει-

ance are possible, Socrates would argue, because there is that within us which is akin to the eternal world of Ideas as there is that within us which binds us to the phenomenal or material world.<sup>19</sup>

Such is the central argument of the *Phaedo*, continued and confirmed in the *Symposium*. Unhappily, in this inadequate summary, it is despoiled of its magnificent art of persuasion; but even in its fulness, and presented with all Plato's imaginative eloquence, one must admit that it still lacks the finality of logical demonstration. One can hear the doubter retort that by the same procedure any proposition, whether true or false, can be established. It is a fact, he will say, that, if you deliberately fix your mind on those so-called Ideas, they will become more and more real to you until you have an unalterable conviction of their existence as independent and eternal entities, and an equally unalterable conviction of something within yourself akin to the immortal nature attributed to them. But this is merely to

σμα λαβὼν περὶ οὐσίας λογικῆς ψυχῆς, ὡς ἐχούσης τι συγγενὲς θεῶ, νοερὰ γὰρ ἑκάτερα καὶ ἀόρατα, καὶ ὡς ὁ ἐπικρατῶν ἀποδείκνυσι λόγος, ἀσώματα. τί δὲ καὶ ὁ κατασκευάζων ἡμᾶς ἐνεποίει πόθον τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν εὐσεβείας καὶ κοινωνίας, ὅστις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐσφαλμένοις ἴχνη τινὰ σώζει τοῦ θεοῦ βουλήματος, εἶπερ μὴ ἦν δυνατὸν τὸ φυσικῶς ποθούμενον τοῖς λογικοῖς καταλαβεῖν; καὶ σαφές, ὅτι ὥσπερ ἕκαστον μέλος ἡμῶν πρὸς τι πέφυκεν οἰκειότητα σώζειν, οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ πρὸς τὰ ὄρατα καὶ ὠτα πρὸς τὰ ἀκουστά, οὕτω νοῦς πρὸς τὰ νοητὰ καὶ τὸν ἐπέκεινα τῶν νοητῶν θεόν.

<sup>19</sup> For a full discussion of Ideas see *Platonism*, chapter vi.

grant that the mind works in a certain way; it manifestly does not prove that the belief so confirmed is true. You have only to dwell on any other proposition, and it will gradually permeate your thoughts until it will seem to you that no other mode of thinking is possible.

So much the Platonist as a dialectician will concede, is indeed obliged to concede; but he will maintain that, although conviction is not proof, the consequences following upon conviction may afford a kind of demonstration which a wise man will not disregard. Set your thoughts to move forward on one path, and you may arrive at conviction indeed, but with that conviction will come confusion of mind and distraction of motives and loss of that assured peace which is the end of all striving and seeking; and this will happen because your thoughts are not in harmony with the realities which are not yours to create and over which you have no control. Whereas by moving forward on the contrary path you will grow in inner strength and happiness, for the reason that you are adapting your belief to spiritual realities. Thus it is with Ideas and immortality; the demonstration of their truth lies in the consequence of believing. So far as life is concerned the test of such matters is a pragmatic inference from experience.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix B.

29A  
40c

41c

In other words, the argument for immortality belongs to philosophy, but lies on the verge of that further province of religion which is concerned with the existence and nature of God. Socrates, in the *Apology*, was speaking strictly as a philosopher when he avowed that no man *knows certainly* whether death is the end of all or a migration from life to life, and when, with this concession to scepticism, he uttered his unfaltering affirmation that we “ought to be of good hope towards death, being persuaded of this one truth at least, that no evil can befall a good man either in life or in death.” I think that Socrates, I am sure that Plato, did not really doubt the immortality of the soul, any more than they doubted the existence of God; but they knew that neither of these beliefs was absolutely essential to the truth of philosophy. Socrates was speaking still as a philosopher, but with his face turned to a diviner light, when in the same *Apology* he dwelt with loving faith on the joys to which he looked forward in a life untroubled by the evils of human injustice, and when, in the *Phaedo*, he comforted his friends with argument after argument to show that his faith was not irrational but confirmed by all the wisdom of experience.

To these arguments he added a picture of what might be supposed to happen to the souls of the blessed in their future life, painting it with the

brightest colours of the imagination, that it might be remembered by his disciples and work upon their minds as an "incantation" against the at-<sup>Phaedo 114D</sup>tacks of incredulity. But a more powerful charm than any he could weave in words was the example of his own faith. It is not without design that Plato has joined together in one dialogue the most elaborate of his (or Socrates') logical demonstrations of the immortal nature of the soul and the minute account of Socrates' conversion to the Ideal philosophy and of his victorious death. It is as if Plato had said: Dispute if you will these arguments of Socrates for the soul's eternity, since in sooth they cannot be made logic-proof; but look at the man himself, and, at the worst, no reasoning will be strong enough to persuade you that such a life was based on a delusion. Nor is there any inconsistency in the fact that immediately after pronouncing his "incantation" Socrates closed the conversation with a warning to his disciples against the mere acquiescence in authority, and with a command to reason these <sup>Phaedo 115B</sup>matters out for themselves in the light vouchsafed to them by their own souls, for, as Hesiod had written, "He is a good man who hearkens to counsel well spoken, but he is the best who thinks out all things for himself."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Works and Days* 293.—One is reminded of the last words of Buddha, which contain a similar command, based on a complex

The reality of Plato's belief in the immortality of the soul is open to no cavil; but the mischievous curiosity (*periergia*), as Plato would have called it, of the German mind has raised a question of a sort virtually to nullify that belief while pretending to render it *gründlich*. It was Hegel who started the trouble—Hegel, the fountain-head, one is bound to say, of a stream of metaphysics that has swamped with its muddy waters almost all the German and British Platonists of the nineteenth century. For the ease of my soul I borrow this statement of the case from one of the latest of the English Hegelianizers. In the Introduction to his edition of the *Phaedo* Mr. Archer-Hind observes:

“Hegel, analysing the conception of immortality, seizes at once upon that which he regards as essential to the Platonic philosophy: this kernel he instantly drags to light, rejecting the husk of *Vorstellung*. Whether an individual consciousness shall continue to exist as such is to Platonism of no metaphysical importance whatever: what is of importance is to grasp the true nature of eternity. The soul's real immortality lies in the operation of thought: eternity is in the nature of thought and has nothing to do with duration.”

of scepticism and affirmation seemingly so different from that of Socrates, yet more like than different if rightly understood: “And now, O priests, I take my leave of you; all the constituents of being are transitory; work out your salvation with diligence” (Warren, *Buddhism in Translations* 109).

From Hegel our British editor passes to Teichmüller, who, as he says, "goes further, and declares that Plato could not maintain individual immortality without grave inconsistency; from which premise he most justly draws the conclusion that Plato did not maintain it." Mr. Archer-Hind's own position is in accord with Hegel's in so far as he holds with Hegel that "the duration of the individual is of no metaphysical importance [metaphysics, however, is of supreme importance to the Hegelian]: . . . Plato's philosophy in no way involves it." He further agrees with Teichmüller in holding "that any interpretation of Plato which attributes inconsistency to him stands self-condemned"; but he softens this assertion by adding that Plato's thought, though fundamentally consistent, shows a regular development: in the *Timaeus*, which expresses Plato's mature views, "personal immortality does more or less [he means decidedly more] recede into the region of the mythical: it enters only in an extremely allegorical guise"; but in the *Phaedo*, he is willing to admit, "although Plato knew very well that neither he nor any one else could demonstrate the immortality of individual souls, yet he was strongly disposed to believe, at least at the time the *Phaedo* was written, that every soul on its separation from the body will not be reabsorbed in the universal, but will survive as

a conscious personality, even as it existed before its present incarnation." Now of the pantheism and metaphysical monism which Mr. Archer-Hind discovers in the *Timaæus* it will be time to speak in a later chapter; here we may venture the assertion that they rest on a mistaken notion of Plato's use of mythology. For the concession in regard to the *Phaædo* let us be grateful; it is not often that your metaphysician, indurated in this school, grants anything to the pleas of humanity and common-sense. And in return we also can make a concession; the physical and the metaphysical arguments of the *Phaædo*, if taken without the Ideal argument, might leave the door open to a pseudo-transcendental interpretation; they turn on an ontological conception of soul in the abstract and have only an indirect bearing on the question of personal endurance. But to leave out the Ideal argument is simply to leave out Plato.

For us this over-wise grasping at the metaphysical discursions in Plato's system seems to begin with Hegel, but in fact it goes back to the Neoplatonists, from whom it came to the German transcendentalists through Boehme, perhaps, and other mystical enthusiasts of the sort. The source of the error may be found in such a passage as this from the opening of the fourth book of the fourth *Ennead* of Plotinus:



“What then will the soul say, and of what things will it have memory, in the world of reason and when it has its life in pure being? We are obliged to say that it contemplates those things and has its activity in those things wherein it has its being; otherwise it would not be there. How then of the things of its life in this world, as that it was devoted to philosophy, and that even while here it was looking to that other world,—will it remember none of these? No. For if, when one is engaged in the act of pure reason, it is impossible to have any other activity than that of reason and contemplation and in this act of reason there is included no reflection on one’s self as having reasoned, but such reflection would come later, if it came at all, and would appertain to one who had already passed from that activity of pure reason,—if this be true, as it is true, then when we are wholly in the world of pure reason, we have no memory of the things that happened to us here, whatever our life may have been. And if, as we suppose, pure reason is all timeless, since the things of that world are in eternity but not in time, it is impossible that there should be memory there of anything whatsoever, much less of the things of this world.”

Now, however this sort of transcendentalism may have impeded itself out in Platonic feathers, and however possible it may be to gather hints from Plato of some ultimate restoration of the

soul to a timeless eternity, such abstractions have no place in his highly concrete thoughts of immortality, nor indeed, one may make bold to say, in any thoughts of immortality that have meaning for a human soul. Instead of looking forward to a future life of empty contemplation divested of memory, Plato regards memory as one of the chief proofs of immortality; instead of idealizing a state of being without self-consciousness, the highest aim of his philosophy is that a man should come to know himself. To say that "Plato's philosophy in no way involves the duration of the individual" is to turn page after page of his writings into mere trifling. Was Socrates saying something that had no connexion with his genuine belief and Plato's, and was he jesting, when at the end of his *Apology* he spoke of meeting the illustrious dead in the world to which he was going and of conversing with them? I think he meant his words to be taken as simply as any Christian's faith is to be taken. Did Plato write with tongue in his cheek when in the *Phaedo* he reports the hope of Socrates—or rather the one thing of which he has no doubt—that his soul is about to pass into the presence of gods who shall judge not as men do, but justly and righteously? And in *The Republic* was he mocking us, when he makes Socrates encourage his young friends at one of the critical points of their debate by bid-

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ding them remember that, though the scoffer may remain unconvinced, they will at least be preparing their own souls against the time when in some other world they may come together once more and argue over these same matters?<sup>22</sup>

No, the attempt to banish personal immortality from Plato's religion is of a piece with the rejection of personality from his conception of God; it follows the effort to inject a Neoplatonic and Teutonic metaphysic into his philosophy, or, when all concessions are made, to lay a completely false stress on the hints of such a metaphysic scattered here and there in the wide circle of his speculation. There can be no right understanding of Platonism until the mind has been swept clean of this whole metaphysical obsession.

The highest reach of Plato's philosophy, confining the word to what may be called the human element of religion, we have found in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, the *Phaedo* and *The Republic*; for his theology we turn now to the discourse on God and Providence inserted in the *Laws* as a kind of general preamble. Taking the word philosophy in the larger sense as an equivalent for the whole circle of religion, we

<sup>22</sup> Εἰς ἐκεῖνον τὸν βίον, ὅταν αὖθις γενόμενοι τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐντύχωμεν λόγοις. So, with a pretty change of ἐντύχωμεν for ἐντύχωσι, James Adam dedicates his noble edition of *The Republic* to the memory of a friend.

may close this chapter with the words of Atticus, one of the soundest of the later Platonizers: "If the soul is not immortal, then there is no reminiscence [from antenatal association with Ideas]. If there is no reminiscence, then there is no acquisition of knowledge. Therefore, as all the dogmas of Plato really hang and depend on the divine nature and immortality of the soul, he who rejects this truth overthrows the entire fabric of Plato's philosophy."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Εἰ δὲ μή ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ ἀθάνατος, οὐδὲ ἀνάμνησις. εἰ δὲ μὴ τοῦτο, οὐδὲ μάθησις. πάντων οὖν τῶν Πλάτωνος δογμάτων ἀτεχνῶς ἐξηρητημένων καὶ ἐκκρεμαμένων τῆς κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν θεότητος τε καὶ ἀθανασίας, ὁ μὴ συγχωρῶν τοῦτο τὴν πᾶσαν ἀνατρέπει φιλοσοφίαν Πλάτωνος (*Apud Eusebius, Praep. Ev. XV, ix, 5*).

## CHAPTER IV

### THEOLOGY

TRANSLATION FROM THE *LAWS*, BOOK X

[The tenth book of the *Laws*, virtually the whole of which follows in translation, is inserted by Plato as a preamble to the particular statutes regarding impiety. It really forms an independent treatise of theology, put into the mouth of an unnamed Athenian who is conversing with a Lacedaemonian and a Cretan friend. To some scholars the theses here presented seem a derogation from Plato's purer philosophy, even a senile concession to popular superstition; to others, including myself, they seem indispensable to a rounded view of Plato's religion. I take this occasion to call attention to Tayler Lewis's edition and interpretation of this book in his *Plato Against the Atheists*, an admirable but now, I fear, little known example of the older American scholarship.]

No one who believes in the gods as law and custom ordain has ever voluntarily done an impious deed or uttered a lawless word. If he has done so it is for one of three reasons: either he does not believe in the existence of the gods,

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as I said, or, secondly, he believes that they exist but have no care for men, or, thirdly, that they are placable and can be turned from their course by sacrifices and prayers.

Now I can imagine such men girding at us and saying: "You gentlemen of Athens and Lacedaemon and Crete speak the truth. Some of us deny the very existence of the gods, whilst others of us believe about them as you say. And we hold that before you begin your harsh threatening you should try to persuade and teach us, on good evidence, that the gods exist and that they are too good to be diverted by gifts and charms from their course of justice. For now, hearing such and suchlike accounts of them from highly accredited poets and orators and prophets and priests and others without number, most of us have no incentive to abandon our evil practices, but sin and then look for healing. From lawgivers<sup>1</sup> who pretend to be humane rather than severe we demand first that you should use some persuasion with us, speaking at least with more conviction of truth than other men even if you

<sup>1</sup> Two things should be remembered in connexion with this word. In many of the Greek city-states the Constitution was the work of some actual or mythical reformer of the government, so that "lawgiver" for Plato's readers would be a synonym for the very principle of law and custom. And, secondly, the three interlocutors of this dialogue are discussing the Constitution to be provided for a city which is to be newly founded in Crete.

cannot discourse more eloquently concerning the existence of the gods; and so perhaps we might believe you. Try then, if what we say is reasonable, to meet our challenge.”

Now it may seem an easy matter to express the simple truth that the gods exist. First there are the earth and the sun, the stars and the universe, and this beautiful arrangement of the seasons by the division of years and months; and there is the fact that all Greeks and barbarians believe in the existence of the gods. Yet I am afraid that evil-minded men—I would never say I am ashamed—will rather despise us. For you do not understand the cause of their quarrel with us, but imagine that their souls are driven to a life of impiety by nothing but the intemperance of pleasures and desires. You quite overlook another cause,—it has escaped your notice on account of your remote position,—and that is a certain ingrained state of ignorance which presents itself as the highest wisdom. There are writings among us Athenians concerning the gods, such as I understand are not found among you of Lacedaemon and Crete owing to the excellence of your Constitution, some in metre, some in prose, the most ancient of which deal with the origin of the heavens and the world in general; and from this they proceed forthwith to describe the birth of the gods and their behaviour

when born. Now, however such writings may benefit or harm the reader in other respects, their very antiquity makes it no light matter to censure them; I can only say that, so far as they have any influence on the service and honour due to parents, I have never found anything useful or even in the least degree truthful to commend in them. Well, these tales of ancient things we may pass over without comment; I am ready to hear of them whatever will please the gods. Our business is to hold the writings of our wise moderns to account for whatever evils they may have caused. The works of such writers have this effect: when you and I mention the evidence for the existence of the gods, bringing forward the sun and moon, and the stars and earth, as being gods and godlike, our youths, who have hearkened to these wise men, declare that such objects are no more than earth and stones with no power to heed the doings of mankind. . . .

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To the point then. How shall we argue for the existence of the gods without indignation? For there is a certain compulsion upon us to be outraged and to hate those who have been and are the occasion of this discussion, by their incredulous rejection of the myths which as young children and nurslings they heard from their mothers and nurses,—heard them indeed recited in sportive songs and serious chants, and in



prayers that accompany the sacrifice, and at the same time beheld such sights as a child delights in seeing and hearing, when his parents are at the altar and are most earnestly concerned for themselves and their children, addressing themselves to the gods in prayer and petition as if the gods certainly existed. So too these sceptics see and hear all men, Greeks and barbarians, in all times of calamity and good fortune, making protestations and supplications at the rising and the setting of the sun and the moon, not as if there were no gods but as if they surely were, and without the slightest suspicion to the contrary. When we are obliged to talk with men who show contempt for these signs, with no pretense of argument, as any one must admit who has the least spark of reason in him, it may be hard to find gentle words for our admonition and instruction in the elementary truth that the gods exist. Yet somehow we must make the venture; for it is a sad state of affairs if half of mankind is to be mad with the frenzy of pleasure, and the other half with indignation at them. So then let the prelude to our argument be free of anger against those who are thus perverted in their understanding, and let us say gently, quenching our indignation, as if we were here conversing with one of these men:

My son, you are young, and advancing age will

cause you to change many of your present opinions for quite contrary views. Wait then until such a time before you set yourself up as judge in matters of the greatest moment; and the greatest matter of all is what you now take so lightly, viz. how the good or ill of a man's life depends on his right conception of the gods. And first I can tell you one great fact concerning them without fear of contradiction; it is this: you are not alone in your view of the gods, neither have you and your friends invented it, but there has been always a greater or less number of men who suffer from this disease. I myself have known many such, and I can say this to you, that not one of those who imbibed in youth a disbelief in the existence of the gods has ever persisted in this opinion to his old age.<sup>2</sup> The two states of mind regarding the gods that do persist—not indeed with many, but they do persist with some—are these: that the gods exist but have no care for human affairs, and, what may follow, that they care but are easily placated by sacrifice and prayer.

<sup>2</sup>How is this statement to be reconciled with the words of 891b, to the effect that the arguments of atheism are scattered broadcast? Does Plato mean that philosophers of mature years are not sincere in their rejection of the gods? Or does this passage refer to laymen, while atheistic philosophers form a small class by themselves, whose practical influence is limited to the young? And even the philosophers, *e.g.* the forerunners of Epicurus, admitted the existence of the gods, though practically they were atheists.

If you hearken to me, you will wait until your opinion concerning them has grown as clear as may be, considering the while whether the matter stands thus or otherwise, and making inquiry of others and more particularly of the lawgiver. In the intervening time you had better not venture upon any impiety towards the gods; certainly he who makes the laws for you will do his best, now and in the future, to teach the truth of these things.

This brings me to say that without foreseeing it we have been led on to consider a remarkable theory, what is regarded by many as the wisest of all theories. There are men who avow that all things, present, past, and future, come to pass by nature, or by art, or through chance. It may be assumed that wise men know what they are talking about; yet I propose to follow them up and examine the views of their party. These hold that the greatest and fairest works appear to be of nature and chance, whereas the lesser works are of art [*i.e.* design], which, receiving the creation of the great and primary works from nature, forms and fashions all those lesser things which are commonly called artificial. To speak more plainly: fire and water and earth and air, they say, all have their being by nature and by chance, and none of them by art [*i.e.* design], while the bodies next after these, as we see

them in the earth and sun and moon and stars, have come into being through the action of these elements, which are altogether without soul. The elements, moving each with the chance of energy in it, by a kind of affinity as they fall together, warm with cold or dry with moist and soft with hard, and all the other inevitable mixtures of opposites blended by chance, have thus and in this manner created the whole heavens and every thing in the heavens, as well as all animals and plants; whence also are the various seasons. There is no mind at work in this, nor any god, nor art, but, as I say, it all happens by nature and chance. Art, they maintain, is altogether a posterior production from these, and, mortal itself and of mortal birth, at a later date has brought forth certain toys of creation, which have little substance of truth but are rather idols or insubstantial forms, of mortal kinship, such as are produced by painting and music and the other arts of this class. If there are arts that produce anything serious, they are such as medicine and husbandry and gymnastics, which associate their power with nature. As for statecraft, they say that only a small part of it has any association with nature, but that for the most part it belongs to art; wherefore law-making as a whole is not of nature but of art, whose statutes lack veracity. Hence these men begin with the statement that

the gods exist by art, not by nature but as a product of laws which vary in various localities as men happen to come to agreement in their lawmaking. Furthermore, one class of objects is beautiful by nature and another class by law. As for the justice so-called of things, it has nothing at all to do with nature, but men are always in dispute with one another about it and changing their views; and as their view happens to be at any time they make this their criterion of justice, which is thus a product of art and of the laws with no basis in the nature of things.

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These, my friends, are the opinions current everywhere among our youth, formulated by wise men who declare that the ideal of justice is that which any one can make to prevail by force. Whence impiety and irreligion lay hold of our youth, as if there were no gods such as the law prescribes and we ought to believe. Whence also factions arise, instigated by those who draw men to a life supposed to be right according to nature, which is in truth to live by dominating others and not by subordinating one's self to others in accordance with law.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> One may recall the warning words of Bishop Butler (Preface to Sermons): "A late author [Wollaston] of great and deserved reputation says, that to place virtue in following nature, is at best a loose way of talk. And he has reason to say this, if what I think he intends to express, though with great decency, be true, that scarce any other sense can be put upon these words, but act-

What then, under these long-standing conditions, ought the lawgiver to do? Can he only stand up in the city and denounce his threats against those who deny the gods or do not think about them as the law prescribes? And so of what is beautiful and just and of all the greatest things and the forces making for virtue and vice, can he only command men to fashion their conduct and belief in accordance with the written prescriptions of the lawgiver, pronouncing the death penalty against any one who does not show himself amenable to the laws, or punishment by stripes and bonds, or by deprivation of rights, as the case may be, or by poverty and exile? Is there no power of persuasion over men, which he can adapt to his words while uttering the laws, and so temper the wild hearts to some degree? . . . If the arguments of atheism were not scattered, so to speak, among all men, there would be no need of our reasoning in defense of the gods' existence; but now we are obliged to do so. For when the laws of the greatest moment are corrupted by evil men, whose business is it but the lawgiver's to come to their rescue?

Now when a man expresses such views as we have described, it is a fair inference that he holds fire and water and earth and air to be the first ing as any of the several parts, without distinction, of a man's nature happened most to incline him."

of all things, and calls them by the name of nature, regarding the soul as a later production from them. Rather, it is no inference, but this is the unequivocal meaning of his words. And what if we have discovered here the very fountain-head of the irrational theorizing in which the students of natural science have ever been indulging!<sup>4</sup> Examine the whole argument carefully; for it is no slight matter if these inventors of impious arguments, and leaders of other men, should turn out to be employing no sound but quite erroneous reasoning. My refutation may appear to take an unusual line, but I maintain that these arguments tending to impiety in the soul really invert the order of existence. That which is the primary cause of the generation and corruption of all things, they declare to be not primary but secondary in origin, and what has arisen later they declare to be primary; whence their error in regard to the real being of the gods. All but a very few men seem to be ignorant of the character and power of the soul; and their ignorance touches not only its other properties but the truth of its generation, that it is among the primary things, having come into being before all

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<sup>4</sup> This is precisely the issue today between religion and the Darwinian philosophy of evolution. On a man's answer to the question will depend his tendency towards a spiritual or a materialistic life.

material bodies, whose every change and commutation it certainly controls. And if this is so and soul is more ancient than body, does it not follow inevitably that the properties and affections of soul would antecede those of body? Hence opinion and attention and reason and art and law would be prior to distinctions of hard and soft and heavy and light. So too the great and primary works and actions would belong to soul, just as they are primary, whereas things natural and nature herself, whose very name has a false implication, would be posterior and subject to art and reason. Nature to them signifies generation in the primary instance; but if soul shall appear to be primary, then neither fire nor air, but soul, being primary in generation, might with a more exquisite propriety be called "natural" by distinction. Such are the conclusions we reach, if we demonstrate that soul is more ancient than body, but not otherwise. . . .

[The Athenian now proceeds to his demonstration of the priority of soul. To this end he analyses motion into ten categories. These include, first, the two mechanical motions of a body revolving upon its axis and of a body changing its position; then the six constitutive motions, which affect the parts, or constitution, of a body, viz. combination, dissolution, increase, diminution, generation, corruption; and, finally, two quali-



tative distinctions, viz. (1) the transmitted motion of a body which moves another and is itself moved by another, and (2) the self-originating motion of a body which moves itself and another. Now it will be seen that the eight mechanical and constitutive forms of motion can be subsumed under the two qualitative categories, and it is clear that all self-originating motion is primary, whereas transmitted motion is secondary. That is to say, so long as one body is moved by another, and that by another, we have an endless chain of transmitted motion, without beginning or cause. The cause and beginning must be in self-originating motion, the most ancient and powerful principle of life and change. To this self-originating motion, this principle of life and change, men everywhere give the name of "soul," whereas that which has no original power of motion in itself, but merely transmits motion, is "body," or "matter." Hence soul is prior to body, and body is secondary and later; in the nature of things soul is master and body is servant.]

We remember our former admission that, if soul shall appear to be more ancient than body, then the properties and affections of soul will be antecedent to those of body. That is to say, character and disposition and will and thought and true opinions and attention and memory will have come into being before length and breadth and

depth and strength of bodies, if in fact soul antecedes body. As a consequence we must further admit that soul is the cause of goodness in things and of evil, of beauty and ugliness, justice and injustice, and all the contraries, if we reckon it the cause of all. Then if soul is the indwelling and ordering cause in all things that are in any way moved, must we not say that it orders the heavens also? We must. And shall we say one soul or more than one? I will take the liberty of saying more than one; not less than two at least we must suppose, the one beneficent, the other of contrary efficiency.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>This is a passage of dubious meaning, reverberations of which will be heard all through the later literature. In it a certain school of Platonists found a text for their theory of two souls in the universe, one good, the other evil. It was taken by Clement of Alexandria in a purely Pauline sense: "That the Devil so frequently mentioned in the barbarian [*i.e.* Christian] philosophy, the prince of the demons, is an evil-working soul, Plato says expressly in the tenth book of the *Laws*: 'Then if soul . . . of contrary efficiency.' In like vein he writes in the *Phaedrus* [240AB]: 'Now there are other evils, but with the most of them some demon has mixed immediate pleasure.' Furthermore in the same tenth book of the *Laws* he clearly sets forth this sentiment of the Apostle [Ephes. vi, 12]: 'Our contest is not with flesh and blood, but with the principalities, with the powers, with the things spiritual of those in the heavens'; for his words are as follows [906A]: 'We have already agreed that the heavens are filled with powers of good, many in number, and with contrary powers, more numerous still than the good; and now we say that we are involved with these in a deathless battle needing a marvellous guard.'" (*Stromata* V, xiv, 92 f.) Now whatever

And thus soul draws and leads all things in heaven and on earth and in the sea by its own motions, which we call willing, viewing, attending, considering, opining rightly and wrongly, itself rejoicing or grieving, courageous or fearful, hating or loving. All these and their kind are primary motions which take up the secondary motions of bodies, and so bring all things to increase and diminution and dissolution and composition, and to the consequent properties of warm and cold, heavy and light, hard and soft, white and black, harsh and sweet. And in whatsoever soul is engaged, if she takes to herself reason as her godlike helpmate, she guides every-

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Plato meant, he did not mean quite this. As we shall see when we come to the *Timaeus*, he regarded the soul of man dualistically, as containing in itself the impulses of desire which, in so far as unchecked they tend to endless expansion, are intrinsically evil, and the checking, controlling spirit which effects good out of them. In the phenomenal world there is a corresponding dualism of forces in themselves endlessly expansive and disorderly and of the divine will which checks and orders them; but there is here nothing to justify the theory of two cosmic souls, one good, the other evil. Apparently in the passage under consideration Plato is thinking rather vaguely of such celestial influences, good and evil, as were to play so large a part in the astrology of the Gnostics and others. In general (see the passage immediately following on page 897) Plato dwelt rather on the ordered motion of the heavenly bodies as a symbol and model of the order to be attained in the soul.—I cannot quite follow the reasoning of Apelt who, in his note on this passage in his translation of the *Laws*, dismisses this mention of an evil world-soul as *rein hypothetisch*.

thing rightly and happily; but if she takes unreason as her associate, all her works are of the opposite character.

What kind of soul then shall we say is lord of heaven and earth and all the revolving world? that which is wise and replete with virtue, or that which possesses neither of these qualities? If, as we say, the whole path and orbit of heaven and all things that move therein have a nature similar to the motion and revolution and calculations of reason and proceed in a manner akin to reason, then evidently the best soul cares for the universe and guides it in such a path as we see. But if they proceed in a crazed and disorderly manner, then the evil soul guides. The question raised involves the nature of the motion of reason, a question not easy to answer intelligently.

In attempting our answer, therefore, we will not, like those who bring night into midday by gazing directly at the sun, suppose that with these our mortal eyes we can see reason and sufficiently understand it. Our safer course will be to look at an image of what we are seeking. And for this image we will take that one of the ten kinds of motion to which reason bears a resemblance. Now, turning back to what we then said, we may recall this fact, that we first placed all things under the two categories of motion and rest. Then of things in motion we found that

some move without change of position, while others are carried from one place to another. Of these two kinds of motion that which occurs without change of position must be motion about a centre, as in the case of objects made perfectly round by a lathe, and this, so far as we can make such a comparison, bears the closest resemblance to the revolution of reason. At least I hold it rather a neat sort of metaphor to compare reason and motion without change of position by saying that each moves in an unvarying course and manner in one place and about one centre and with unaltering relations and by one law and order; we think of the motion of reason as we do of the revolution of a smoothly rounded sphere. On the other hand motion that is not in an unvarying course and manner, nor in one place, nor about one centre, nor with unaltering relations, nor uniform, but without system or order or any law,—such motion is akin to all unreason.<sup>6</sup>

With these premises we are prepared to assert boldly that, since soul is that which turns all

<sup>6</sup> This argument may sound quaint and fanciful to the modern reader; but Plato's thought is very much the same as Kant's when he expressed his abiding wonder at the moral sense in man and at the motions of the stars in the heavens. It is the simple idea echoed by many of the poets who, like Dante and Matthew Arnold, have found symbols of strength and peace in the celestial orbits.

things about, the revolution of the heavens must be undoubtedly the work of heedful and order-giving soul, whether the best soul or its opposite. Furthermore, in view of what has been said, it would be impious to suppose that such motion is bestowed by any other than soul endowed with all virtues, whether that soul be one or more than one. And still further, if soul guides the revolution of all the celestial bodies—sun, moon, and the other stars—it must guide each of them individually; so that, if we direct our argument to one of these celestial bodies, what we say will apply equally to the rest of them. Now we all see the body of the sun, although no one sees its soul—nor indeed the soul of any other creature's body living or dead! yet we have a strong conviction that there does exist such a thing, too fine to be perceived by our corporeal senses, but perceptible to reason. Taking our stand then on reason alone and reflection, we can make this further point in confidence, that if soul guides the sun, it does so in one of three ways: either residing within yonder visible spherical body it governs the moving mass, exactly in such manner as the soul in us causes all our motions; or having provided itself with a body of fire or some form of air, as some maintain, it impels the sun forcibly from without, as body impels body; or, thirdly, being itself naked of body, but having certain

other marvellous and incomprehensible powers, it acts as guide. Now, whether riding the sun as a chariot it brings light to all, or acting from without, or however and in whatever manner, this soul is of a nature superior to the sun, and every one must recognize it as a god. And so of all the stars and the moon, of the years and months and various seasons, our account will be the same. We shall say that, as soul or souls have been shown to be the cause of all these, and to be endowed with the excellence of every virtue, they are gods, whether residing in bodies as animate creatures, they govern the whole heaven, or in whatsoever manner. Let a man, any man, make these admissions and he will never endure the idea that all things are not replete with gods.<sup>7</sup> . . .

We have, I think, sufficiently answered the first class of objectors. Our next argument must be directed to the man who acknowledges the existence of the gods, but holds that they have no care for the affairs of mankind. To such an one we will say: My good sir, in respect of your acknowledgment of the gods, no doubt something within you akin to the divine leads you to honour and acknowledge its kind; but the fortunes of evil and unjust men, in public and private life,

<sup>7</sup> This is the saying as old as Thales: *πάντα πλήρη θεῶν*.

900 not truly happy, but held to be happy in the exaggerated opinions of the undiscerning, and celebrated without regard to fact in song and tales of every sort,—these are the things that have brought you to impiety. Or perhaps you have seen wicked old men reaching their term of years and leaving their children's children in the highest honours, and are amazed at the sight; or you are troubled by the stories you have heard, or by the spectacle before your own eyes, of men frequently raising themselves from small estate to tyranny and exalted place by their acts of impious and high-handed wrong. And with these things happening, manifestly you are unwilling, by reason of that inner kinship, to blame the gods as responsible for such events. And so, in your inability either to reason the matter out or to think ill of the gods, you have fallen into this state of mind, wherein you admit their existence, but believe they despise and disregard the affairs of mankind.

901B So much we might say to our bewildered youth, lucky indeed if we can find words to exorcize such a belief before it passes into a worse form of impiety. And in the first place it ought not to be difficult to draw from him the admission that the gods are not less careful of the little things, that if anything they are more careful of them, than of the great and conspicuous. . . . For



suppose some one has a certain task to perform, a task that requires particular care, and suppose that his mind pays heed to the great matters involved but neglects the small, can we find any good reason for commending him? Consider the question. Whether god or man be the agent, there can be only two explanations of such a course of action: either he thinks it will make no difference to the whole if the small matters are neglected, or he sees the difference but is neglectful by reason of effeminate slackness.<sup>8</sup>

Now there are three of us here, and we may issue this challenge both to the believer in the gods who thinks they are easily placated and to the believer who thinks them neglectful of small things. To begin with, you both say that the gods know and see and hear all things, that nothing is hid from them of which there can be perception and knowledge. Further, you say all things are possible to them within the power of mortals and immortals. Still more, we all, the five of us, have agreed that they are good, and supremely good. How then can we possibly admit that they, being such as we believe them to

<sup>8</sup> For *ῥαθυμία καὶ τρυφή* I have taken a phrase from *Paradise Lost*, xi, 630: "From man's effeminate slackness it begins." *Rhathymia* (easiness of temper, indolence, laziness, slackness) is a word that becomes more and more important in the Greek theories of evil, from Plato to Chrysostom.

be, approach any work in the spirit of effeminate slackness? . . . No, it can only be that, if they neglect what is small and slight in relation to the whole, they do so, either because they know they have no reason to attend to any such thing—or, is there any other alternative but ignorance?

And so we renew our question: My good sir, shall we take you as averring that the gods are ignorant and through ignorance neglect what they ought to heed, or that, knowing their duty, they resemble those very wretched men who, as we say, know the better things, yet do the worse by reason of their subjection to pleasures and pains? Certainly neither this nor that. Now the affairs of mankind belong to the animate part of nature, and man himself is the most religious of all living creatures. We assert, too, that all mortal creatures, including the whole orb of heaven, are the possession, as it were, the herd, of the gods. Let a man, then, say that these things are great to the gods, or small, in either case would it behoove our owners, our shepherds as it were, being of nature most heedful and good, to neglect us?

And we may look at the matter in another way. Perception and power are by nature contrary one to the other in respect of ease and difficulty. That is to say, it is more difficult to see and hear small things than great, whereas it is

easier for any one to carry and master and care for the small slight things than the contrary. A physician, for instance, who has been called in to cure the whole body, will scarcely succeed in his business if, being willing and having the power to care for the great symptoms, he neglects the lesser members and symptoms. And the same may be said of a pilot or general or husbandman or statesman or any other manager who cares for the many and great matters to the neglect of the few and small. Just as a mason will tell you that the large stones will not lie well without little ones. Let us, therefore, not hold God in less account than mortal artificers, who, as they are more skilled, so more exactly and perfectly with their single art finish what is small and what is great in the tasks set them; neither let us suppose that God, the most wise, being willing and having the power to attend, heeds the great things, but neglects those little things which are the more easily heeded, like some feckless and lazy artificer who grows slack over his toil. Such an opinion of the gods we will never admit; to think thus of them would be neither holy nor veracious.

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And now at last we may seem to have talked to some purpose with the man who likes to charge the gods with neglect. Nevertheless, as our arguments hitherto have been rather of the sort

to force him against his will to confess error, I think we ought now to apply certain myths as charms to his mind. Let us persuade the young man, if words may avail, that all things have been ordered by God, who has the world in care, to the salvation and virtue of the whole, each member passively and actively contributing its part according to its ability. Over this multiform world rulers have been set to govern sectionally down to the smallest detail of what must be suffered and done, to the end that each section may be brought to its appointed consummation. Of this system, O wretched man, thou art a single part, which looks to the whole and tends to that, though in itself of the least magnitude; yet it has not occurred to thee that in such a system every part of creation has its birth to the end that the life and being of the whole may enjoy happiness, not the whole for thee, but thou for it. For every physician and every skilled artificer does all things for all, yet, having his eye on what tends to the common good, executes the part for the whole and not the whole for the part. But thou art vexed, not understanding how that which happens to thee is best for the whole and for thee, so far as the common creation permits. And since a soul, appointed now to one body, now to another, is forever undergoing all kinds of change, by reason of itself or of another soul,

nothing remains for the draught-player to do but to move to a better place that character which has grown better, and that which has grown worse to a worse place, according to the merit of each, that it may obtain such a lot as behooves it.

Enough has been said, I think, to show how easily the gods may care for all things. For if, looking to the animate part of creation, the creator proceeded by a continual change of all things, transforming fire, for instance, into cool water, and making a multitude of things out of one or one out of a multitude, then by the first or second or third transformation there would result an infinite mass of change; but as it is now, he who cares for the whole enjoys a marvellous ease.<sup>9</sup> In this way. Since our king sees the soul at work everywhere, and in all its deeds much of virtue and much of vice, and both soul and body, like the

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<sup>9</sup> I am very much in doubt about the meaning of this difficult passage. Various emendations have been proposed, none of which is quite satisfactory. My translation is based on the supposition that Plato is contrasting two ways in which the world-ruler might deal with souls in accordance with their deserts. He might so contrive the changes in the inanimate world that each soul at any moment should be properly placed in respect of its vice and virtue. This would be the difficult way and would result in infinite perturbations of the natural order; it is the way described above, and rejected. The other way would preserve the regularity of the inanimate world, and would change the place of the souls in this world according to their growth in vice and virtue. This is the method of Providence he now proceeds to describe.

popular gods, not eternal, but indestructible (for there would be no birth of living creature if either of them should perish), and since he understands that the good of the soul is by nature always beneficent and the evil injurious—perceiving all this, he has contrived that each member of the living world be so placed as most easily and effectively to render virtue victorious and vice defeated. To this end he has contrived that the character developed by us should determine the character of our seat and the place occupied by us at any time; but the development of our particular character he has left to the will of each of us. As a man desires and as is the character of his soul, such and in such manner, for the most part, each of us is born.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Phaedo* 107D and *Republic* 618B.—This is also the later Christian theory, although with a difference. For Plato change and imperfection are inherent in the original substance of soul, and it lies within the will of each of us to direct our metamorphoses to ever better or ever baser states. The Christian attributed this principle of change to the fact that the soul was created, like all things else, *ex nihilo*; the very act of creation is a transition from not-being to being, and is thus the cause and beginning of a state of endless mutation. But the Christian, who is bound by his creed to believe that creation as the work of God is intrinsically without blemish, refuses to see the cause of evil in the condition of mutability itself; he exonerates the creator by assuming that the principle of change in the creature assumes the form of a voluntary and uncaused declination away from God. (See, e.g., Athanasius, *Contra Gentiles*, and Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration*.) We shall have more to say of this subject in another place.

All things, therefore, change that partake of soul, having the cause of mutation within themselves, and as they change they are moved about by the order and law of destiny. When the alteration in their character is slight, their change is small and, so to speak, on the same level; when it is great and much of injustice enters, they fall into a deep place and into those lower regions which under the names of Hades and the like fill us with terror, and haunt our dreams in this world and in our disembodied existence. Thus it happens, when the soul by its own vehement will or by the strong influence of others partakes in larger measure of vice or virtue, if by association with divine virtue it becomes greatly virtuous there is a great change in its place, a change altogether for holiness, as it is carried into a better home; but if it develops otherwise, the seat of its life is changed accordingly.

This, my brave young son, who think you are neglected by the gods, "this," as Homer says, "is the justice of the gods who inhabit Olympus"—that he who grows in vice shall make his journey to the more vicious souls, and that he who grows in virtue shall journey to the more virtuous souls, receiving in life and in all his deaths such treatment as it behooves like to receive from like. Think not that you or any other shall ever escape this justice or shall ever boast to have out-

witted the gods; above all other laws of justice this law has been ordained by those who have ordained, and it were well to heed it with all care. For never shall you be unheeded by it; neither in your littleness shall you so sink into the bowels of the earth, nor in your exaltation shall you mount in flight to the heavens, but you shall pay the fitting vengeance of the gods, either while abiding here, or when you have made your journey to Hades, or have been conveyed to some place more savage than these. And the same reckoning is to be made of those whom you have seen raising themselves from little to great by impious deeds or other wickedness; it has seemed to you that their state was a change from misery to happiness, and so, looking upon their deeds, you have thought to behold, as reflected in a mirror, the total neglect of the gods, knowing not in what way the lives of such men pay contribution to the sum of things. Yet this above all you ought to know, you who are so bold; for without this knowledge a man shall never see the type and form of life,<sup>11</sup> neither shall he have any right to

<sup>11</sup> To the word *τύπος*, "type and form," Lewis appends the note: "That is, without this doctrine of the *end* of the wicked, and of the manner in which the present suspension and the final infliction of their doom contribute to the universal harmony, life would have no meaning. It would be *Tohu* and *Bohu* (Genesis i, 2), a moral chaos on which no intelligible form had been impressed."—Thus we have the two orders. The phenomenal world



offer an opinion touching its happiness and unhappy chances. If you will hearken to us, a senate of old men, who tell you that you know not what you are saying about the gods, God himself will be your good helper. But if you are still waiting for the word of conviction, then, if there is any mind in you at all, listen to what we say to the third sceptic. For that the gods exist and that they pay heed to men, I think we have sufficiently demonstrated. The third point, that they can be placated by unjust men with bribing gifts, we must yield to no one, but rather must disprove by every means within our power.

Come then, by the gods themselves, in what way would they be placated by us, if so be they are placated? Who and what would they be? Rulers at least they are, if in their hands lies the is a sphere of mechanical law established on the flux, but our place in this world is changed and determined by the gods in accordance with our conduct. The material world in itself is heedless of our wants—as Euripides says: “It profits us not at all to be vexed with things, for it matters nothing to them”—but the Providence of the gods is just. There is the physical law of things and there is the moral law of souls, and these two laws, so far as our limited vision reaches, seem to run side by side without causal nexus or composition. So it is that, according as our interest and concern are set on one of these laws, the other law will appear to us as a sphere of unreality. For an eloquent disquisition on the illusion of the phenomenal world and the eternal reality of the moral order as they strike on the religious imagination, see the peroration (p. 729B ff) of Chrysostom’s seventy-sixth Homily on Matthew.

906 management of all this expanded world. But rulers of what sort would they resemble? To whom may we fairly liken them, comparing great things with small? Would they be such as drivers of racing teams, or as pilots of vessels? Or perhaps they might be likened to rulers of armies, or to physicians who wage war against diseases of the body, or to farmers who in fear for their crops watch the customary bad seasons, or perhaps to keepers of herds. We have already agreed that the heavens are filled with powers of good, many in number, and with contrary powers, more numerous still than the good; and now we say that we are involved with these in a deathless battle needing a marvellous guard, and that the gods and daemons<sup>12</sup> together are our allies and we on the other hand are the property of the gods and daemons. Injustice and insolence with folly are our ruin, whereas our salvation is justice and temperance with wisdom, which last have their habitation with the soul-powers of the gods, yet here too in some small measure are seen to dwell with us. Nevertheless, so it is said, certain souls, manifestly brutish, dwelling on earth and enjoying the profits of evil-doing, pay homage to the souls of the guardians (whether we liken

<sup>12</sup> The reader needs scarcely to be reminded that in classical Greek the word *daemon* means a power lower than the gods, but not maleficent.

these to dogs or shepherds or see them quite as the supreme lords), and so use the persuasion of flattering words and of magic prayers as to win the right to grasp at any advantage among men, yet suffer no harm. Such at least is the rumour spread by the wicked. But we say that this evil of grasping advantage, as we have named it, if it occurs in the body of our flesh is properly called disease, in the annual seasons and the years pestilence, and in cities and governments injustice, which is only the same thing under another name. Such necessarily would be the argument of one who says that the gods are ever ready to pardon unjust men and doers of injustice, if they will share with the gods their spoils; as if wolves were to share a little of their ravages with the dogs, and the dogs, being tamed by such gifts, should permit the herds to be ravaged. Now would not a man, whoever he may be, make himself simply ridiculous by likening the gods to any of these guards—to pilots, for instance, who should be beguiled by libations and the mere vapour of wine to make shipwreck of their vessels and seamen? or to drivers ranged in race who should be persuaded by a gift to betray the victory to another team? or to such generals, or physicians, or farmers? or to herdsmen or to dogs who should be charmed by wolves? Nay, of all guards the gods together are the greatest, and their trust is

over our greatest things. And shall we say that the guardians of what is fairest, themselves distinguished for virtue in their trust, are baser than dogs or the common run of mankind who yet would never betray justice for the impious bribes of the unjust? No. The very mention of it is intolerable, and of all the workers of impiety, of all impious men, he who clings to this belief would be judged rightly the worst and most impious. And so we may say we have sufficiently demonstrated the three theses proposed by us: that the gods exist, that they are heedful, that they are implacable to the appeals of injustice.

It may be that the zeal of contention with evil men has led me to speak with undue vehemence. If I for my part have appeared contentious, it was that such men might not prevail in the discussion and so suppose they had authority to act as seemed to them good, in accordance with whatever views of the gods they might entertain. Hence, I say, my zeal to speak trenchantly. And if I have accomplished anything at all by way of persuading these men to look on themselves with disfavour and to embrace a different course of life, I shall be well content with our preamble to the laws on the subject of impiety.

## CHAPTER V

### THEOLOGY: THE BEING OF GOD

The central theme of *The Republic*, that which gives this dialogue its leading place in Plato's works, is summed up in the phrase, the philosophy of the soul: "Thither we must look," says Socrates, "to the philosophy of it." To pursue philosophy, to love wisdom, is to seek to know one's soul, especially "to discern its true nature, whether it be uniform or multiform." The whole trend of the dialogue had been to show that practically the soul is dual, having in it that which rides above the distractions and passions of this earthly existence, but having also within it that which draws it down from its self-possession by desires and appetites, pleasures and pains, in some way associated with the flesh. All experience points to this dualism of our being, yet withal, though we are unremittingly conscious of this divergent pull, we think that in some mysterious manner the truth of the soul, our higher self as we may regard it, is that diviner member which endeavours to shake itself free of those distracting impulses,

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as if they were earthly accretions clinging to it and deforming its beauty. We do unrighteousness, yet we know that righteousness is the native element of the soul, its true property, of which somehow it has been deprived and for which it longs as for its own.<sup>1</sup> And this knowledge is confirmed by, rather is coincident with, a sense of self-justification independent of the world's judgment and rewards, which marks the progress of the soul in righteousness and, as it were, back to itself. So it is that knowledge of the soul, the knowing one's self which was the command of Apollo to all men of Greece, starts from and terminates in the perception of justice as a thing desirable in itself, and the profoundest philosophy, after its manifold searching and questioning, finds its goal at last in the simple axiom that is on the lips of all mankind though so little understood: virtue is its own reward, be good and you will be happy.

We have seen further that, in order to bring out this philosophical truth in its naked strength, Plato was content for the time to leave a cleft between the moral sense of justice in the soul and the seeming disregard of morality and justice in the physical conduct of the world. But at the end of the tenth book, after the passage on the philosophy of the soul, which is a summary and

<sup>1</sup> *Lysis* 222D: Τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ οἰκεῖον ἂν ταῦτόν φῶμεν εἶναι.

consummation of all that preceded, he suddenly declares that besides the inner witness there is yet another confirmation of the value of justice, viz. the fate of the soul in its immortal progress after death under the righteous judicature of the gods. A larger view of life, he would say, will reconcile the seeming disparities of destiny, and will show that there is a divine government of justice in the world as well as a human law of justice in the soul. This is no withdrawal from Plato's former position and contains no latent contradiction, as some critics would have it; his meaning is not for a moment that what he has to add will be a repudiation of his philosophical conclusion, but that theology and mythology are complementary to his philosophy, the three forming together the complete life of religion. The clear simple truth, that which we learned from immediate experience and intuition, has been given to us by philosophy; this we can possess without theology and without mythology, but, having this, we have laid the foundation for the superstructure of religion. In a way the superstructure may even be greater and fairer than the foundation; and Plato can say that the first honour is due to the gods and only the second honour to the soul,—to speak otherwise, having granted the existence of the gods, would be impious and insolent. Nevertheless, as we shall

see, the strongest evidence for the existence of the gods is derived from the soul's own consciousness of itself, and in logical order as in security of conviction, philosophy takes the premier place in the religion of Plato.

The concluding section of *The Republic* is thrown into the form of myth, and its consideration belongs to another place. Here we have to deal with the theological treatise inserted in the *Laws*, a translation of which was given in the preceding chapter. It opens with a solemn statement of the importance of accepting just those three propositions which were rejected hypothetically in the philosophical argument of *The Republic*, viz. the existence of the gods, their providential care of humanity, and their inexorable justice. These are the three theses to be established. The first belongs to theology pure and simple, the second stands midway between theology and mythology, and the third turns back to theology with a new confirmation.

For the first thesis, the existence of God or of the gods, Plato has three arguments: from design, as we should say; from intuition, or the universality of belief, and from the nature of the soul. Of these three the last is no more than a development of the conclusion reached in the philosophical part of *The Republic*, and it is on this that he really rests his case.



As St. Paul declared that God has not left Himself without a witness in the hearts of men, "for the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead,"<sup>2</sup> so Plato, in his argument from design, points to the visible order of the heavens, the stars and the universe, as an eloquent witness to the existence of a creator. Like Paul, or the Pauline writer to the Ephesians, he saw in all that outspread beauty "the manifold wisdom of God," and was not "ashamed" to confess his belief. These variegated patterns Republic 529c wrought out in the circle of the sky are but tokens, he says, of a spiritual world. Such is the testimony from without, speaking in a language clear and convincing, he thought, to those who had eyes to see and ears to hear. And to this argument corresponds the witness of intuition, that all unsophisticated men, Greeks and barbarians, do believe in the existence of the gods. Modesty alone, not to mention a proper scepticism towards our individual powers of reasoning, ought to make us slow to accept our doubts against the common-sense of the world. Yet he knows that there are writings abroad which seek to argue away this instinctive faith by explaining the sun and moon and stars as mere masses

<sup>2</sup> Romans i, 20.

of matter moving with no spiritual force to guide them, and by ridiculing as old wives' tales the beliefs taught at a mother's knee and expressed in the acts of public worship. And these books have an especial attraction for the knowing young men of Athens. It is hard not to be indignant with these wise moderns, these striplings, for the most part, who make the assurance of youth a substitute for reflection. He would like to say of such men what Paul actually said of the same class in his day: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."<sup>3</sup> But vituperation is not persuasion, and so he sets himself to reason with them, gently; suppressing, if possible, his feeling of indignation.

He proceeds then to his third and, as he thinks, most cogent argument, based on the conception of soul as that which alone possesses the faculty of moving itself and of imparting motion to others, whereas body, or matter, has only the faculty of transmitting motion. In the natural order of logic, that which originates motion, in a world where all things are visibly moving, is antecedent to that which is moved. "Thus soul draws and leads all things in heaven and on earth and in the sea by its own motions, which we call willing, viewing, attending, considering, opining rightly and wrongly, itself rejoicing or

<sup>3</sup> Romans i, 22.

grieving, courageous or fearful, hating or loving." It will follow further that the revolution of the heavens, which displays such manifest beauty and regularity, must be the work of a heedful and order-loving soul. The sun and moon and stars have their course not by chance but by the direction of guiding powers which are consciously good, and over all the universe presides that great spirit which is no other than God.

Such in brief is Plato's main proof of the being of a deity, proffered by him as a substitute for, or confirmation of, the common arguments from design and the universality of belief. Inevitably it raises two questions: first as to the validity of the logic, secondly, granted the validity, as to the meaning to us of such a God as it establishes.

Now up to a certain point the logic of the Athenian, who speaks for Plato, is convincing and would meet today with few if any objectors. No one is likely to dispute with him if he gives the name "soul" to the cause, or principle, of motion in the world, and the name "body," or "matter," to that which transmits motion, provided always he does not presume on the popular meaning attached to the word soul. I take it that most biologists of today will go a step further with him and will accede to the definition of consciousness as a faculty of self-motion. For such a

statement I have at least the authority of a piece of ephemeral literature<sup>4</sup> which would seem to be fairly representative of the modern point of view. The writer takes for his text a sentence from Balzac: "If God is eternal be sure that he moves perpetually—perhaps God is movement"; and from this text he proceeds to the argument (which is not precisely Balzac's as indeed Balzac's intention is not quite Plato's) that "life can exist without consciousness, but not consciousness, so far as we are aware, without life." The data of biology, he thinks, show that animal life begins with the advent of self-determined motion, and consciousness would appear to be a further development of this same faculty. "It is at least," he says, "strictly in accordance with the hypothesis of consciousness deriving from movement that in human beings movement precedes consciousness by some months, and consciousness usually ceases some time before physical death." That is to say the man of science to-day will probably stand with Plato in rejecting the crasser form of materialism and mechanism, which prevailed among the Darwinians of the mid-nineteenth century as it did among the knowing youth of Plato's Athens. He will admit the existence of self-determined motion in the world,

<sup>4</sup> *The Heredity of the Soul*, by A. Wyatt Tilby, in the *Edinburgh Review* for January 1919.

and having made this admission, he must, if he be reasonable, accept the introduction into his scheme of things of a force indeterminable and spontaneous and extra-scientific. He will agree, again that is if he be reasonable, that consciousness is connected with this self-determined motion, and so will grant to the human soul a partial escape at least from the nexus of mechanical cause and effect which enchains matter as the receiver and transmitter only of motion. So far the man of science may go, perhaps is likely to go; but, granting so much, he may consistently draw back from the conclusion which Plato had in view. Consciousness, that is to say, all that gave any significance to soul as Plato thought of it, may be merely a derivation from, and secondary quality of, self-motion; and there is no proof that it is co-extensive with such motion, going back to the self-moving power, whatever that may be, which is the origin of all motion—nothing, from these admissions, to force the inference that soul, in this sense, as including reason and the aesthetic and moral judgments, is antecedent to such attributes of motion as are indicated by heavy and light, swift and slow, etc., much less the inference that God, as synonymous with such a soul, is the author and governor of the world as we know it.

No, it cannot be said that Plato's attempt to

prove the existence of God by logical demonstration from the nature of motion is rigidly convincing; though I think it fair to add that this demonstration, rightly understood, is less unconvincing than the ontological syllogism of Anselm and Spinoza and others of later date. And I suspect that Plato himself was aware of the final inadequacy of pure reason here, as in the whole metaphysical field. Otherwise why should he have based the great argument of *The Republic*, where he was looking for certainty, on a hypothetical atheism? You cannot conceive his undertaking, in like manner, to argue for the being of God from a hypothetical rejection of the soul's existence and of its irrefragable consciousness of the value of righteousness. In other words his theology is really an ethical sequel to that spiritual affirmation which he took from the lips of Socrates: It is better to do justice, better, if needs be, to suffer all injustice, than to do injustice; and this I know as I know the being of my own soul, though all else be shrouded in darkness and mystery. Granted this, as it must be granted, then Plato would say, indeed he has said in the *Philebus*, that as it is absurd to see in our material body anything more than a minute fragment of the body of the universe, so it is fatuous to suppose that our human soul, with its sense of justice and injustice, its foresight and after-

thought, exists alone, with nothing corresponding to it in the world at large. And so, granted the existence of a cosmic soul, the argument from priority will follow, but still rather as an *argumentum ad hominem*, an appeal to interest, than as a metaphysical demonstration. He whose attention is set on the things of the soul will by the natural gravity of interest think of the soul as prior in power and worth to the body, whether in himself or in the universe.<sup>5</sup> It will be impossible for him to fall in with the theories, be it of the ancient Democriteans or of the modern evolutionists, which regard a purely mechanical self-motion as first in the order of things and the conscious self-motion of the soul as a development out of blind mechanism at some point of time. That will seem to him the last absurdity. Nothing will be able to shake him out of his belief that there has been a self-conscious, self-moving soul in the world from the beginning; in simpler language, that God is. If he has looked deeply and honestly into the matter, he will not contend that this belief is quite of the same kind as the knowledge of his own soul, and he will admit that the object of his belief is seen more or less vaguely through the haze of distance. But

<sup>5</sup> *Timaeus* 46D: Τὸν δὲ νοῦ καὶ ἐπιστήμης ἐραστὴν ἀνάγκη τὰς τῆς ἔμφρονος φύσεως αἰτίας πρώτας μεταδιώκειν, ὅσαι δὲ ὑπ' ἄλλων μὲν κινουμένων, ἕτερα δὲ ἐξ ἀνάγκης κινούντων γίνονται, δευτέρας.

he will hold that his belief is at the least more reasonable than the dogmatic negation of the atheist and more tenable than the sceptical suspense of the agnostic. In a metaphor dear to Plato and all the Platonists, he would liken the central truth of philosophy to the sun in the heavens, which throws out its light in circles ever widening and ever lessening in radiance with their distance from the source. So, he would say, the truths of theology are not the sun of our spiritual life, but though, like the greater planets, they shine only with reflected splendour, yet are they luminous still through the darkness of our night with unwavering beauty and majesty.<sup>6</sup>

As for the value of such a belief, that will depend mainly on the character of its object. What and who is the God of the Platonic religion? The "philosophy of the soul" taught us that there is something within us set apart from the sway of passion, unchanged amid all that changes, our truer Self; and by analogy God, who is conceived in the likeness of the soul, ought also to be immutable, incapable of falsehood, without blemish of evil. And these are the qualities actually attributed to him in the outlines of theology sketched in the second book of *The Republic*.<sup>7</sup> God is, in his character, forever immutable;

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>7</sup> 379A: Οἱ τύποι περὶ θεολογίας.



there is no power outside of him strong enough to alter his being, nor has he within himself any defect which calls for reparation. No enemy exists who should frighten him to take refuge in deception; no one is dear to him who should need to be beguiled by false appearances. Rather, he is perfectly simple and true in thought and deed; and the signs and visions that mislead men in their waking and sleeping are not from him. He is good, and desires the harm of no one; beneficent, and does no evil nor is the cause of any evil; all that is good proceeds from him, but for the evil things in the world and in the heart of man he is not responsible. The gods—or God in the collective sense—are wise also, as they are good; they see and hear all things that fall within the range of perception, and all things are possible to them within the power of mortals or immortals. These are the attributes of Plato's deity; of omniscience, omnipotence, ubiquity, and other metaphysical abstractions Plato has no word, or, if he seems anywhere to suggest them, they are repudiated by the whole tenor of his theology and mythology.

Laws 901b

In connection with this avoidance of metaphysical terms, it is important to utter a warning against two kindred and persistent errors in the interpretation of Plato's theology: the identification of God with Ideas and the denial to

God of personality. The deity is morally immutable but not immutability, perfectly true and good but not truth itself or goodness itself. Almost, in one place, Plato absorbs God into the Idea of goodness, but not quite, and in the *Timaeus* he is careful to speak of the creator as good, never as goodness. To have fallen into such an identification would have been to confuse the boundaries of philosophy and theology with results disastrous to his whole system of religion; it was left for the Neoplatonists and for overzealous Christian theologians to forget these distinctions. Of this error we shall have more to say later; it is sufficient here to assert emphatically that for Plato God was not a philosophical entity, much less a metaphysical abstraction, but truly the maker and father of the world.

The denial of personality to Plato's God, so far as I can understand the case, rests on two grounds: one general, being a supposition that the very conception of personality was lacking to the Greeks, the other particular to the Platonic philosophy. As for the first of these grounds, whatever plausibility it possesses would seem to be derived from the absence in Greek of any term corresponding precisely with our word "person." Because the Greek tongue wants the term, therefore, it is argued, the Greek mind lacked the conception. But this, I maintain, is a linguistic fal-

Republic 509B

Timaeus 28c

lacy. It may be conceded that such a defect of terminology would make itself felt in various ways, more especially in the field of technical literature;<sup>8</sup> but to say that the sense itself of personality was lacking to the minds that created the Homeric poems, the Attic tragedy, and the Platonic Dialogues is an absurdity on the face of it. Is Odysseus no *person*, or Antigone, or the Socrates of the *Apology* and the *Phaedo*? And I am afraid that the extension of this linguistic fallacy into the subject matter of religion is only one phase of a wide-spread and rather ugly form of conceit. You might suppose, from the solemnity with which the word "personality" is pronounced by a certain school of modern theologians and philosophers of a theological cast, that some new panacea had been discovered, capable of curing every spiritual ailment of the soul. In the volume of *Mansfield College Essays*, for instance, one of the contributors, Mr. A. N. Rowland, exclaims pontifically that "personality is the one mystery that eludes the grasp of science," and so it is; but does it follow that the utterance of the mystic formula is going to solve the difficulties of religious faith which have been troub-

<sup>8</sup> The case is quite similar to the deficiency in respect to "religion." Greek had special words for the various aspects of "personality" (*psychê*, *prosôpon*, *hypostasis*), but no clearly defined term for the general conception.

ling an ignorant world for some thousands of years? Shall we forget that long ago the Christian Church almost wrecked itself in the Nestorian and Eutychian controversy over the *hypostasis* and *prosôpon*, which is about the same as to say the "personality," of Jesus?

The second ground of denial runs parallel with the rejection of personal immortality as incompatible with Plato's Idealism.<sup>9</sup> It is entirely of a piece with that Hegelian interpretation of the Dialogues in the spirit of Plotinus, and is, I do not hesitate to say, the most mischievous error in the history of philosophy. Surely the denizens of Olympus were human and personal beyond the gods of any other of the great religions known to us. If Zeus and Hera were not personalities, I do not see what meaning is to be attached to the word, and neither Socrates nor Plato ever rejected these gods of the people, though they strove to purify and supplement the common conception of them. And the high God

<sup>9</sup> An interesting and popular statement of the metaphysical position, with references to Zeller and others, may be found in John Oakesmith's *Religion of Plutarch*, p. 205. Mr. Oakesmith himself thinks that Plutarch has advanced in philosophy by his belief in a personal God, whereas "the element of personality is totally absent" from Plato's conception. I should say rather that Plutarch's strength lay in holding fast to a true Platonism, in this respect at least, against the invasion of an Aristotelian metaphysic which was about to culminate in Neoplatonism.

of philosophy, whom Plato would impose on the polytheistic mythology, was still human and personal. "The two essential constituents of human personality," says Mr. Rowland in the essay already quoted, "are self-consciousness and self-determination." But these were just the qualities from which Plato in the theological tract of the *Laws* drew his argument for the priority of soul to matter and for the consequent existence of God. Soul, *psychê*, is that in man which is self-conscious and self-determined<sup>10</sup>—it is in fact in one of its senses almost an equivalent for our word personality—and God is to the universe what the soul is to man, and something more. What else can be made of the argument from a self-motion which is distinguished from a mechanically transmitted motion by the attributes of thought and feeling, the sense of beauty and ugliness, right and wrong?

The God whom Socrates served and Plato preached was not an empty generalization of metaphysics and was closer to the human heart than the *nominis umbra* which the Deists, as children of the ancient Porch, pretended to adore as

<sup>10</sup> So in the *Timaeus* 77B Plato combines self-motion and self-consciousness in his distinction between plants and men: "The plant was not endowed by nature with the faculty of observing its own being and reflecting thereon; hence it lives and is in a way a living creature, but is stationary and rooted in its place, because it lacks the power of self-motion."

a semi-personification of scientific law. Plato was still a poet of the race of Homer and Pindar and Aeschylus, though the first of philosophers. But it would be shirking the truth to ignore the fact that the supreme Deity of Platonism, while far removed from the First Cause of metaphysics and science, is left somewhat vague by the denudation of the warmer traits of the mythological imagination. I would preserve, if possible, a just measure in my apology. Plato, it must be admitted, is as cautious in what he does not say of God as he is confident in what he does say, and he repeatedly gives warning against the assumption of knowing more than we actually know. "It is hard," he declares, "to discover the maker and father of the universe, and impossible, when discovered, to express him to all men." Yet withal he will not utterly suppress curiosity in these high matters, or acquiesce in silence; he will even take a stand in opposition to the sham modesty which would forbid a man "to search into or be over curious about the Greatest God and the universe as a whole."<sup>11</sup> The point to be made

<sup>11</sup> These two passages, *Timaeus* 28c and *Laws* 821A, are among the most influential in Plato's works, and innumerable echoes of them will be found in the Hellenistic writers. The passage of the *Timaeus* is grasped at by Christian apologists to show the inferiority of pagan speculation to revealed theology. The passage of the *Laws* was taken by Cicero (*De Nat. Deor.* i, 12) without its context and so quite misunderstood. By the Christians it was

from these two memorable passages is simply the reverence of Plato always in his approach to this theme—a reverence which might be described as a feeling compounded of the Socratic affirmation and the Socratic scepticism. The spirit in which he conducted his inquiry may be learned from the three minor theological dialogues—the *Euthyphro*, if that marvellous little work can be called minor, the *Second Alcibiades*, and part of the *Lysis*.

Now it may be granted at once that this reticence before the divine mystery, this confessed ignorance of God's nature as revealed to the Jew by prophecy and to the Christian by the incarnation, leaves the Platonic Deity a pale conception by the side of Jehovah or of the divinely compassionate Father, a conception lacking comparatively in driving force and wanting in some of the deeper human consolations, although, in compensation, it is free also of the sharper incentives to fanaticism which have maddened so many religious communities. We may grant so

commonly quoted, or echoed, as a command against over-curiosity. So, *e.g.*, Chrysostom (*In Rom.* 641D) admonishes those who would insist on the logical difficulties of election and reprobation: "Be not over-curiously about God." See also *In Mat.* 775E. The Christian preacher, I think, was not far from the real meaning of Plato, as Hobbes certainly was very far when, in his *Letter About Liberty and Necessity*, he said: "We ought not to dispute of God's Nature, he is no fit subject for our Philosophy."

much; but still for all that is necessary to the religious life of a man, for the large things of the spirit, the theology of Plato is sufficient. Thus much we know—and it is the gist of the whole matter—that the souls of men are not set adrift in a soulless world, either to fortify themselves in the harsh pride of indifference or to sink down in abject terror at the thought of their loneliness. However humbly Plato may have shrunk from defining the maker and father of the universe, his God is not the Unknowable of the dogmatizing agnostic. He who reads Plato's theological discourse may recall Spencer's desolating confession at the end of his life:

“There is one aspect of the Great Enigma to which little attention seems given, but which has of late years more frequently impressed me. I refer not to the problems which all concrete existence, from suns down to microbes, present, but to those presented by the universal form under which these exist—the phenomena of Space. . . .

“And then comes the thought of this universal matrix itself, anteceding alike creation and evolution, whichever be assumed, and infinitely transcending both, alike in extent and duration; since both, if conceived at all, must be conceived as having had beginnings, while Space had no beginning. The thought of this blank form of existence which, explored in all directions as far as



imagination can reach, has, beyond that, an unexplored region compared with which the part which imagination has traversed is but infinitesimal—the thought of a Space compared with which our immeasurable sidereal system dwindles to a point, is a thought too overwhelming to be dwelt upon. Of late years the consciousness that without origin or cause infinite Space has ever existed and must ever exist, produces in me a feeling from which I shrink.”<sup>12</sup>

Say what one will, these blank misgivings are the inevitable outcome of a practical atheism that has not numbed the imagination into sleep; they follow inexorably, as it were the Erinyes of philosophy, any conception of the world as a huge unconscious mechanism, at the heart of which sits blind Chance or blind Law. We may believe of Lucretius, the supremely great spokesman of all those against whom Plato was contending in his theology, greater than any who succeeded him,

“Who dropped his plummet down the broad  
Deep universe, and said ‘No God,’  
Finding no bottom”—<sup>13</sup>

we may believe of him that he was “nobler than his mood,” but if we do so it is because his infinite sadness teaches a truth he himself could not learn.

<sup>12</sup> *Ultimate Questions* 301-304.—See *Shelburne Essays* XI, 146.

<sup>13</sup> Mrs. Browning, *A Vision of Poets*.

From all such blank misgivings the Platonist is set free. So certain is he of a supernatural power ruling the world and displaying itself in the larger spectacles of nature, that he is able to draw from these a lesson for the ordering of his own soul. He will go further than this, and will believe that the sun and moon and the other luminaries above us are not merely signs of a central wisdom from which all order springs, but are themselves gods, or the visible chariots of gods.

It was in fact not the least advantage of Plato's untrammelled theology that it left room in the universe for a host of lesser deities, the two conceptions of monotheism and polytheism being not antagonistic or mutually exclusive, but rather different aspects of one and the same truth. And so, besides those more philosophic gods who ride the spheres, Plato is not afraid to acknowledge the gods of the people, including the whole hierarchy that extends from Zeus upwards through Cronos to the vaguer personifications of Earth and Ocean and Sky, and down through the lessening generations. The good things of life are the gifts of the divine bounty, and our gratitude for the dance, let us say, may well be directed to Apollo and the Muses, and for the exhilaration of the vine we may praise Dionysus. In their pity for mankind the gods have bestowed these blessings, and shall we withhold our thanks-

giving because we know not in what manner the invisible donors greet one another in the heavenly ways? Even the *Di minorum gentium*, each "little god of small things,"<sup>14</sup> who walked unseen with the plowman at his plow and watched the mother as she nursed her child, need not be excluded from the philosopher's pantheon. Of all these gods, great or humble, Plato will say that we have no certain or even probable proofs; but their names have come down to us from remote antiquity when perhaps mankind was more intimate with its divine source, and why should we reject them? "All things are full of the gods"; this we know, and how can we speak better of them than as we have been taught by tradition?

But though Plato so far accepts the popular belief in a spirit of more or less sceptical acquiescence, he deals very differently with the current tales that attributed loose or immoral conduct to the gods. Such stories he repudiates always with the utmost indignation. Even the human passions of a more innocent character he is inclined to repudiate as incompatible with any form of the divine nature, and to one who has

<sup>14</sup> From the fine epigram of Perses (Κἀμὲ τὸν ἐν σμικροῖς ὀλίγον θεόν), which Mr. Mackail translates: "Even me the little god of small things if thou call upon in due season thou shalt find; but ask not for great things; since whatsoever a god of the commons can give to a labouring man, of this I, Tycho, have control."

read the second book of *The Republic* it may seem that he has left to the happy immortals of the Homeric Olympus little more than Homer himself left to the shades of the underworld. Let us admit that there is some difficulty in accepting the Zeus and Apollo of tradition while stripping them of what really invested them, in the popular mind, with the substance of life. Yet Plato might say that inconsistency in such matters is almost another word for humility; and he might add that traits were still left to the gods sufficient to present them to the imagination as living entities—Zeus with his thunderbolts and Apollo with his lyre—without degrading them by admixture of the baser instincts of men. The untutored mind may have true glimpses of the coming and going of the immortals, though it wrap the truth about with its own coarser fancies.

But the manifestations of the divine nature did not end with the greater gods of the poets, or with those lesser beings who haunted the springs and glens and other fair spots of the earth or stood by men in their toils and pleasures. Still below these was the strange race of daemons, those mysterious forces from the invisible world to whom no specific names were given and who were scarcely personified, if at all. By the very vagueness of their nature these would appeal to the

philosophic mind which was reaching out for some point of contact between a new conception of the divine and the popular mythology. So, it will be remembered, a reverence for the daemon, or the daemonic power, was the basis of the charge brought against Socrates as an introducer of new gods; this reverence was indeed, in the form given to it by him, the beginning of a new religion, which was taken up by Plato and so passed on to the world.<sup>15</sup> The same belief will be found in the philosophers of the Hellenistic age who drew on Socrates and Plato for their faith; it plays no insignificant rôle among the Christians,<sup>16</sup> whose conception of the Logos was deeply affected by remembrance of the Platonic *dai-monion*, though they were wont to conceal their indebtedness by converting the daemons into devils.

Plutarch more especially deals with the subject in his discussion of *The Daemon of Socrates* and in his two essays on the oracles. As for his explanation of the Socratic daemon he would have us believe that it goes back to a statement

<sup>15</sup> It might even be said that "the daemonic" (*τὸ δαιμόνιον*) is the nearest equivalent in the Greek language for our word "religion." So Hug in his excellent note to the *Symposium* 202E: "Den Dämonen wird in diesen Sätzen das ganze Gebiet der Religion zugewiesen, wofür den Griechen ein zusammenfassender Begriff fehlt."

<sup>16</sup> Justin Martyr, *Apologia* II, x.

of one of the two Theban Pythagoreans who were present with Socrates on the day of his death. Whether this is a bit of dramatic fiction or not, Plutarch has given expression to the view that was current in his age and that became almost the central dogma of Platonism for later times—such at least it was for the so-called Cambridge Platonists of the seventeenth century. The story is that Simias once asked Socrates about the daemon, and, receiving no answer, had not repeated his question. But he had often heard Socrates declare those to be vain pretenders who said they had seen a divine apparition, whereas he would gladly hearken to those who thought they had heard a voice. Hence the conjecture that this daemon of Socrates was not an apparition, but rather the perception of a voice or an apprehension of speech conveyed to him in some unaccountable manner, as in a dream there is no real voice yet we have fancies and apprehensions that make us imagine we hear some one speak. Such a perception is common in dreams, because the body whilst we sleep is quiet and unperturbed; but Socrates' soul, being pure and free from passion, and mixing itself with the body no more than necessity required, was easy to be moved and apt to take an impression from any light influence; and that which influenced it was not a sound, but what one might call the un-

spoken word (*logon aneu phônês*) of a daemon impressed immediately on the mind. We, it is true, as it were groping in the dark, find out one another's conceptions by the voice; but the conceptions of the daemons carry a light with them, and shine for those who are able to perceive, so that there is no need of words such as we use as signs to one another, seeing thereby only the images of the conceptions. Most men believe that daemons communicate illuminations to us in sleep, but think it strange that they should communicate the like to us whilst we are awake and have our senses and reason vigorous; as wise a fancy as it is to imagine that a musician can use his harp when the strings are slack, but cannot play when they are screwed up and in tune. For such men do not consider that the effect is hindered by the unquietness and incapacity of their minds; from which inconvenience Socrates was free, as the oracle assured his father whilst he was a boy.<sup>17</sup>

Whatever may have been the ultimate source of this explanation of the Socratic guide, it was on such a theory that Plutarch built up his own religious creed, as expounded in the two essays on

<sup>17</sup> *De Genio Socratis* 20. Abridged and adapted from the translation revised by W. W. Goodwin. For a hint of the same explanation given by a younger contemporary of Socrates, see the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon, IV, iii.

the oracles. Deity, he says, appears to us in this world of material phenomena as the race of daemons, through whom men communicate with the gods and are made one with them.<sup>18</sup> Through the daemons come oracles and all intimations of things in the womb of nature; and if the oracular voices are obscure and broken and fallible, it is because the daemon himself belongs to a low order of the hierarchy and furthermore is obliged to communicate with us by means of the resisting medium of a human soul and material organs.<sup>19</sup> From the same daemoniac otherworld comes the voice, or shadow of a voice, that brings warnings to the individual soul, heard vaguely at times by all men but comprehended only by

<sup>18</sup> *De Defectu Oraculorum* 10, *et passim*. The same thought is developed even more precisely by another Platonist, Maximus Tyrius, in the ninth and eleventh of his *Discourses*. The latter of these closes with a striking account of the celestial hierarchy: "Consider the great King himself, unmoving, like Law, to those that obey passing on the security that exists in himself. Consider also those that share in his government; many visible gods, many invisible, some clustering about his threshold as courtly ushers and princes of the blood, familiar at his table and hearth; others the servants of these, and others still inferior. You behold the succession and ranks of authority descending from God to earth."

<sup>19</sup> *De Pythiae Oraculis* 21. Plutarch's argument is amusingly like that of our modern spiritualists who apologize for the stammering utterance and the vacuity of the supposed communications from the dead. But I think Plutarch would have found the reports of our *séances* more disturbing to his faith in the unseen world than he found the priestly records of Delphi and the other oracular sites of Greece.



those who have attuned their body until it has become as it were a sounding board for these celestial echoes.

This Plutarchian sense of the daemonic, or of the undefined spirit as we might say, everywhere interpenetrating the visible world, lay, I think, in the background also of Plato's theology. We Timaeus 90A are plants not of an earthly but of a heavenly growth; the soul is a creature of the gods and had elsewhere its rising, and some day, if we Phaedrus 246A ff. practise philosophy in the love of true knowledge and true virtue, the soul shall be lifted up again as in a winged chariot to be with the gods and to know them as they are, and move with them in their procession behind the great God of all, to a place whence they and we shall contemplate with pure joy the supernal beauty which is not of this world. But now it is not so. Now the soul is held down with earthly weights, and its desires are not clean, and before its eyes are the veils of the flesh. What the gods behold in unclouded splendour, we see only in shadows and signs; and when they speak to us of their vision and of what our life should be, we hear their voices faintly and indistinctly as sounds borne to us from afar on the winds. Now our communion is not so much with the gods directly—though they too are really near at hand—as with the daemons, or the daemonic soul of the world. This

Symposium  
202E ff.

it is that acts as interpreter, or ferryman, between gods and men, carrying our petitions and offerings to the gods and bringing to us their commands and answers, being, as it were, an intermediary which bridges the interval between the mortal and the immortal and binds the whole together into one unbroken order. By the daemonic provision we have the art of divination and are instructed in the ceremonies of religion, and through it we learn the charms and mystic rites that pacify the terror of our lonely state. He who has attained to wisdom in these matters is the daemonic man, whereas those who have acquired cunning in the other arts are only craftsmen of a vulgar sort. Many are the daemons and many their kinds, and one of them is the love that raises the desire of the soul from earthly to heavenly things.

Plato's theology is thus an extension of his "philosophy of the soul," and the strength of his conviction might be summed up in a later saying: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"—or rather, changing the accent, he would say: For they shall see *with* God.

## CHAPTER VI

### THEOLOGY: PROVIDENCE AND JUSTICE

The background, so to speak, of Plato's religion is that sense of the daemonic lying everywhere half-concealed and half-revealed behind the material phenomena of the world; but in the preamble to the *Laws* he is dealing more specifically with the theological problem of God as the supreme personal force in the divine hierarchy. We have seen how he sought to establish the being of such a deity; the two remaining questions are the Providence of God and the inexorability of his justice. Now we know from *The Republic* that the moral qualities which can be attributed certainly to God are goodness and wisdom, truth and immutability, and we shall not go astray in looking to these attributes to find the rule of his activity as it is concerned with our own being: Providence will be the working of God's goodness and wisdom, the inexorable rigour of the divine justice will be a corollary of his truth and immutability.

God is good, Plato says in the *Timaeus*, and having no envy desired all things to be as like to himself as possible; this indeed is the sovereign

principle of creation and of the cosmos. And in the preamble to the *Laws* this same attribute of goodness is extended to his ceaseless care of that which has been created; there is no dullness or indifference in his good-will that he should neglect his handiwork and abandon its maintenance to the fumbling fingers of Chance or to the relentless hand of Fate. Plato's argument for Providence is merely an extension of his diatribe against the followers of Democritus and Protagoras, better known to us in their later development as Epicureans. These men, whether for prudential reasons or from conviction, were willing, if pressed, to admit the existence of the gods, but rendered such an admission meaningless for religion by setting the gods apart in some remote sphere entirely severed from actuality, while they regarded all the immediate operations of the world as the effects of chance or impersonal law. Practically their position was the same as that of the agnostics or evolutionists of today—or should we say of yesterday?—who by relegating God to the Unknowable free themselves from any charge of dogmatic atheism yet are able to elaborate a mechanistic theory of the universe untrammelled by the interference of a known deity. They acknowledge a God, but by rejecting Providence deprive the word of any human significance. Such philosophers might be

called semi-atheists, and it is against these rather than the professed atheists that the strength of Plato's reasoning is directed.<sup>1</sup>

Now it is easy to say, in a loose general fashion, that a God of goodness will not leave the work of his hands uncared for; but as soon as we try to realize this care in the form of a Providence extending to all the daily occurrences of a man's life, let us say, and of all men's lives, three great obstacles start up, connected respectively with difficulties of the reason, of the imagination, and of our moral sense.

As for the first difficulty, reason may ask why an omnipotent Creator should not have so contrived his handiwork that it would, as it were, run its own course like a perfectly designed engine; why should it require his constant attention and, to speak irreverently, tinkering? Plato's answer to such a question may be gathered from the *Timaeus* and elsewhere. God is not omnipotent, and indeed such a term belongs to those

<sup>1</sup> Professor Jebb, in his note on *Oedipus Tyrannus* 978, calls attention to the statement of Favorinus (Diogenes Laertius, *Plat.* §24 to the effect that Plato *πρῶτος ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ . . . ὠνόμασε . . . θεοῦ πρόνοιαν*. The note continues: "Bentley takes this to mean that Plato was the first to use *πρόνοια* of divine providence (not merely of human forethought). . . . [But] the Stoics, not Plato, first used *πρόνοια*, without further qualification, of a divine providence. . . . The meaning of Favorinus was that Plato first established in *philosophy* the conception of a divine providence, though popular language had known such a phrase before."

metaphysical abstractions which have no place in religion or in true philosophy. Nor is creation an act of evoking something out of nothing, an act complete and definitive in itself and depending solely on the will of the Creator; it is rather the approximate and continuous subjection to law and order of a subsisting chaos which never succumbs perfectly to restraint and never entirely yields up its own spasmodic impulse. Such is the phenomenal world whereinto the souls of men are born, each with his own little world of chaos within himself to regulate and subdue. Rationally considered, Providence is an integral part of the Platonic dualism, needing no such defense as is demanded to justify its inclusion in a theological or metaphysical monism.

The real difficulty in the way of Providence is not raised, for the Platonist at least, by the reason, but first of all by the imagination. It is the very grandeur of the theory that militates against a practical faith. We picture God as sitting afar off in splendid isolation, uttering his decrees that run like thunder through the infinite ways of space; and to think of him at the same time as present in the streets of our cities and walking beside us as we go about our daily business, is an impiety, if not an impossibility.<sup>2</sup> Our

<sup>2</sup> It is a popular error to think of this difficulty as first raised by the Copernican astronomy, whereas in fact it was already acute

spiritual vision is irredeemably spacial. It is temporal also, and we shrink back appalled at the idea of a mind that can embrace consciously at one and the same time so vast a complexity of ever-changing events. It was this diffidence of the imagination which led certain of the Stoics to say that "the gods care for great things, but neglect the little," a saying which we have preserved in our legal maxim, *De minimis non curat lex*.<sup>3</sup>

Of the same order is the doubt forced upon us by the sense of isolation that is a part of our personal consciousness. Not in Plato's day only but always our scepticism towards Providence has sprung in large measure from a kind of terror of vanity that invades the soul when we reflect on our unimportance in a society of beings each centred in its own destiny. Dr. Johnson, with his customary skill in lending gravity to the common-places of experience, has laid his finger un-

under the old system. It makes little difference to the imagination, when the problem is rightly conceived, whether Providence is concerned with one world of men or with many worlds of animate beings. See Aubrey de Vere's poem on Copernicus.

<sup>3</sup> Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* ii, 167: Magna di curant, parva neglegunt. Euripides had said the same thing: Τῶν ἄγαν γὰρ ἄπτεται θεός, τὰ μικρὰ δ' εἰς τύχην ἀνεῖς ἔᾶ. The thought becomes common. See, e.g., the discussion in Epictetus I, xii, 1, and the fanciful, half Christian half pagan, use of the idea by Synesius, *De Providentia* I, 10 and 11.

erringly on the emotion that at times must overtake all men:

“The truth is that no man is much regarded by the rest of the world. He that considers how little he dwells upon the condition of others, will learn how little the attention of others is attracted by himself. While we see multitudes passing before us, of whom, perhaps, not one appears to deserve our notice or excite our sympathy, we should remember that we likewise are lost in the same throng, that the eye which happens to glance upon us is turned in a moment on him that follows us, and that the utmost which we can reasonably hope or fear is to fill a vacant hour with prattle and be forgotten.”<sup>4</sup>

It is not only our personal vanity that is hurt by such a reflection, but, it may be, our religion also. If the sum of life is to fill a vacant hour and be forgotten, where is the kindly hand of Providence? When, perceiving the indifference of our fellow men and shuddering perhaps at our own inability even to grasp the reality of so vast a horde of self-centred individuals, we sink back into the loneliness of our soul, then the spiritual imagination is paralysed and inevitably we extend this sense of neglect into whatever regions are open to the thought of consciousness. As we learn that personality among men means separa-

<sup>4</sup> *Rambler* 159.



tion, it becomes extremely difficult to realize in the mind such a divine person as is demanded by the idea of Providence. "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" Plato's reply to these difficulties is to point to the magnificence of the divine order that keeps the stars in their courses and forbids the sun to grow weary, its marvellous scope and unremitting diligence, and then to ask on what ground we believe that such a power would overlook or in any wise neglect the details of government. Would it be through ignorance? No, not through ignorance. Would it be from effeminate slackness? No, certainly not from that. Would it be because he knows that he has no reason to attend to such things? And again the answer must be no; for not even among men would a wise physician or husbandman or statesman be commendable on such a basis. "Neither let us suppose that God, the most wise, being willing and having the power to attend, heeds the great things, but neglects those little things which are the more easily heeded, like some feckless and lazy artificer who grows slack over his toil."

Plato's argument, judged superficially by its terms, may sound merely quaint and antiquated in modern ears; but I suspect that, rightly understood, it reaches far down into the heart of the matter. It is an appeal at once to the reason

to clarify itself and to the imagination to lift itself to a truer vision of the nature of God, whose greatness is measured, not by a kind of isolated universality, but by his power of comprehending endless details and of being present with each while still grasping the whole. And the obstacle raised by our moral sense Plato will meet in much the same way. The question itself is one that has troubled many minds, and has not grown old with time: how shall we reconcile faith in the watchful government of a just and mighty God with the apparent injustices of human destiny? "The fortunes of evil and unjust men," Plato says, the spectacle of "wicked old men reaching their term of years and leaving their children's children in the highest honours," these are the things that drive a reflective mind to doubt the reality of Providence. So Job asked: "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?" Ennius states the matter bluntly, in good Roman fashion:

Ego deum genus esse semper dixi et dicam caelitem,  
 Sed eos non curare opinor quid agat humanum genus;  
 Nam si curent, bene bonis sit, male malis, quod nunc  
 abest.

Plutarch will compose one of his subtlest essays, *De Sera Numinis Vindicta*, to explain

away the paradox, and a whole literature of apology, following the model of the Chaeronean Platonist, will grow up among Christian theologians. But there is no need to multiply examples; the question has arisen wherever and whenever men begin to consider "the ways of God to man" in the light of their own sense of justice and moral right. Our business is with the theology of the *Laws*, which offers the first serious theodicy of the western world and, I hazard the statement, still the most satisfactory.

Plato opens his argument with what he calls a kind of mythical charm for the incensed soul:

"Let us persuade the young man, if words may avail, that all things have been ordered by God, who has the world in care, to the salvation and virtue of the whole, each member passively and actively contributing its part according to its ability. Over this multiform world rulers have been set to govern sectionally down to the smallest detail of what must be suffered and done, to the end that each section may be brought to its appointed consummation. Of this system, O wretched man, thou art a single part, which looks to the whole and tends to that, though in itself of the least magnitude; yet it has not occurred to thee that in such a system every part of creation has its birth to the end that the life and being of the whole may enjoy happiness, not the whole for thee, but thou for it. . . . But thou art vexed, not

understanding how that which happens to thee is best for the whole and for thee, so far as the common creation permits.”

This is the famous paradox of the whole and the part which will play so important a rôle in the philosophies of the Stoic, the Deist, the imperfect Christian, and, one may add, the modern man of science; and if Plato had stopped here it would be hard to rescue him from the charge of that shallow optimism which virtually denies the existence of anything intrinsically wrong or odious in the world. We might, of course, as a corrective, point to the numerous passages in which Plato gives expression to his belief in the very insistent fact of evil, and indeed no one can read much in the Dialogues without feeling that their tendency is rather to over-emphasize than to minimize this reality: “For us,” he says, Republic 379c “evils abound far more than good.” But such a correction, taken alone, would still leave him open to the same accusation of fundamental inconsistency which was brought against the Stoics for teaching in their physics that whatever is is right, while in their ethics they bemoan the condition of human life as a state of misery and evil. Plato’s escape from this inconsistency is hinted at in the last clause of the passage quoted: “so far as the common creation permits.” Now, in themselves, these words might be used by a Stoic,

but with a different implication. The Stoic, as an avowed monist and determinist, for whom God is the cause of all things that are, would understand them to mean simply that men as mere fragments of the whole must have the incompleteness of fragments; he would not admit that this incompleteness of the separate parts imports any taint of evil or even of imperfection into the system as a whole. But, however Plato may seem, in this passage torn from its context, to be indulging in the same sort of logomachy, it must be remembered that he is not a monist and never for a moment holds that God is the determining cause of all things. On the contrary, after his statement in *The Republic* of the superabundance of evils in our life, he adds that "God and no other must be held the cause of what good we enjoy, whereas for the evils other causes must be sought, and not God." The same idea occurs elsewhere in the Dialogues, and in the *Timaeus* it is made the text for an elaborate fable of creation.

Plato's theory, which combines the recognition of evil with a perception of the world's harmonious structure and finds a place for Providence, would then be something like this. There are sources of good and evil in the soul, and as soul permeates all and governs all, there must be both good and evil in the heavens as in all the other

operations of the phenomenal world. He will even say that "the heavens are filled with powers of good many in number, and with contrary powers more numerous still than the good"; but he is speaking here of the heavens as part of the scene of human life and of the "deathless battle" in which mankind is engaged. When he forgets our mortal stress, and regards the splendour of the spheres alone in their matchless ordering, then the thought of evil almost drops from his mind, and the reaches of the sky become for him a place very good, where the gods are wheeling above us in their shining chariots. That is to say, in less figurative language, the physical universe in its large and general aspect appears to be a realm of law and regularity, and this adjustment of parts into one harmonious system is for its own end.<sup>5</sup> To rearrange the whole, or any parts of the whole, so as to mete out physical justice to every human soul as it chooses to live its life would throw the cosmos into chaos. If this unthinkable rearrangement were the only course open to the judge and creator the result would be a terrible discord between nature as a sphere

<sup>5</sup> In its general aspect. Plato is aware that the regularity of physical law is after all only approximate. This is true in astronomy, as he expressly declares in *The Republic* 529c ff; and the central myth of the *Politicus* shows that a narrower inspection discovers a principle of disorganization (σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία) in the physical world never fully subdued.

of impersonal order and nature as the environment of free spontaneous souls; physical law would mean moral anarchy. And this in fact is the conclusion of those who, seeing only the present, deny the efficacy of Providence. But there is another course open to the divine ruler, and the present is not all. If it is impossible to recast the world to suit the moral needs of each soul, it is possible to change the place of the soul in the world in such a manner that its environment and the accidents of its existence shall be fitted to the demands of justice. Again, if the observed facts of life do not seem to correspond with such a procedure, it is because we know the soul only in its present stage. But the soul does not come into existence at a moment of time and pass out of existence at another moment of time; as it shall continue to exist after death, so it existed before birth, and this life that we know is only one in a long, perhaps an infinite, chain of lives. At each birth the soul is assigned to a body and placed amid surroundings which are at once the award of its acts in a preceding life and the most suitable gymnasium to train it for a succeeding life. God, Plato says, "has contrived that each member of the living world should be so placed as most easily and effectively to render virtue victorious and vice defeated. To this end he has contrived that the character developed by us

should determine the character of our seat and the place occupied by us at any time; but the development of our particular character he has left to the will of each of us. As a man desires and as is the character of his soul, such and in such manner, for the most part, each of us is born.”<sup>6</sup> This, roughly sketched, is the dogma of transmigration or metempsychosis, by which Plato would explain the apparent injustices of life and confirm the belief in Providence.

In the preamble of the *Laws*, where the inten-

<sup>6</sup> Plato's theodicy by means of metempsychosis is like that of the Hindus save in one important point. The Hindus eliminated the question of creation altogether, and thought of the soul as caught in a *samsâra*, or cycle of existences (cf. the Orphic *κύκλος τῆς γενέσεως, ὁ τῆς μοίρας τροχός*), without beginning. Plato, having the idea of a creator in mind, taught (*Timaeus* 41E) that the souls all came from his hands equal in power and endued with equal knowledge, so that in the divergency of their future careers they would not reproach their maker if one fell behind the other. But the question is inevitable: why, if they were created in every way equal and started with no innate difference of disposition, should one soul choose righteousness for its portion and another evil? Origen fell into the same difficulties by connecting the theory of metempsychosis with the act of creation; the Christian, indeed, by the nature of his premises, could not escape this inconsistency. To Plato it was open to consider the soul as without beginning; and in fact this idea is really implied in his theory of creation, since the soul-stuff is not created by God *ex nihilo* but has its own existence. And the argument from the conservation of energy in the *Phaedo* and in *The Republic* 611A shows that Plato really regarded the individual souls as without beginning as they are without end.



tion is mainly theological, Plato deals with the dogma rationalistically, as it touches on the being of God and the reality of Providence; but elsewhere he treats the subject more mythologically, more, that is to say, from the human side. Particularly at the close of *The Republic*, in the story of Er the Pamphylian, he draws it out into a splendid allegory of the soul's progress. This Er, it is related, was slain in battle, but on the twelfth day, as he was lying on the funeral pyre, returned to life, and told a marvellous tale of what he had seen and heard in the other world. Of his journey to the mysterious tribunal of the gods and the judgment there pronounced on the souls of the dead, of the penalties endured by the evil in the nether regions and the blessings enjoyed by the righteous in the celestial sphere, we say nothing, except to note that Plato, like the Hindus, combines in his account the rather incompatible theories of satisfactory awards in heaven and hell and of a rebirth in accord with the soul's previous deeds. In both cases, Greek and Hindu, we have apparently a philosophical conception of good and evil as working themselves out in life by their own gravity, so to speak, superimposed on a more popular mythology.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The two conceptions are reconciled in a manner by the possibility of the soul's escape from the cycle of rebirths into a heaven of endless philosophic repose (placed by *Timaeus* 42B

However that may be, after a period of a thousand years the disembodied souls—all save a few whose evil is incurable or, as we gather elsewhere, who have transcended mortal bonds by the perfection of philosophy—return to the place of tribunal, and from there, after a few days, proceed to a still more mysterious spot at the centre of space, where the three Fates sit at the spindle of Necessity, revolving with their hands the whorl in which move the sun and moon and earth and planets, and presiding over the transit from the world of death to the world of life.

Here a prophet, as Er relates the story, first arranged the newcomers in order; then he took from the lap of Lachesis lots and samples of lives, and, having mounted a high pulpit, spoke as follows: “Hear the word of Lachesis, the daughter of Necessity. Mortal souls, behold a new cycle of life and mortality. Your daemon will not be allotted to you, but you will choose your daemon; and let him who draws the first lot have the first choice, and the life which he chooses shall be his destiny. Virtue is free, and as a man honours or dishonours her he will have more or less of her; the responsibility is with the chooser—

figuratively in the stars from which the souls began their mortal existence, but in other dialogues otherwise conceived), and by the punishment of an endless hell for those who fall into incurable evil.

God is not responsible.” When the interpreter had thus spoken, he scattered lots indifferently among them all, and each of them took up the lot which fell near him, all but Er himself (he was not allowed), and each as he took his lot perceived the number which he had obtained. Then the interpreter placed on the ground before them samples of lives; and there were many more lives than the souls present, and they were of all sorts. And here is the supreme peril of our human state, and to this end each one of us should leave every other kind of knowledge and seek and follow one thing only, if peradventure he may be able to learn and discern between good and evil, and so to prepare himself to choose always the better life when the opportunity comes.

Now the spectacle before Er was most curious, —sad and laughable and strange. He who had the first choice came forward and in a moment chose the greatest tyranny; his mind having been darkened by folly and sensuality, he had not thought out the whole matter before he chose, and did not at first perceive that he was fated, among other evils, to devour his own children. But when he had time to reflect, and saw what was in the lot, he began to beat his breast and lament over his choice, forgetting the proclamation of the prophet; for, instead of blaming himself, he accused chance and the gods, and everything rather

than himself. Strange and manifold were the other choices, mostly foolish and with little wisdom. Of all that Er beheld only Odysseus, whose lot happened to be the last, took time for deliberation and found what he desired and what had been neglected by everybody else.

So, having chosen, the souls passed on to the Fates, who ratified the destiny of each, and thence through a scorching heat to the plain of Forgetfulness and the river of Unmindfulness. And when they had drunk a portion of the water of this river and had gone to sleep, there came a thunderstorm and an earthquake, and then in an instant they were driven upwards in all manner of ways to their birth, like shooting stars.<sup>8</sup>

Such is Plato's fullest account of the dogma of transmigration. It will sound strange to our modern ears, accustomed as we are to a very different order of ideas, and the first question to arise will touch its credibility. The answer, if we pause at all for an answer, will depend on several considerations: the source of the dogma and the extent of its acceptance, the personal immortality of the soul, the meaning of retribution and purification, the reasonableness of the opposed belief in a static heaven and hell, the seriousness with which Plato himself held the dogma, and the function of mythology.

<sup>8</sup> This story of Er is abridged, with some alterations of language, from the translation by Jowett.

Now in regard to the first of these considerations, I have said, and may need to repeat, that the purpose of this work is not to investigate sources, nor even to mention them, except in so far as they may be essential to an understanding of the matter in hand. Apparently the doctrine of transmigration came to Plato, directly or through the mediation of Socrates, from the school of Pythagoras, and from the Orphic and Dionysiac worship which was spreading over Greece and profoundly modifying the older forms of religion. In itself this derivation, whether correct or not, would have little significance for us, were not the question of credibility affected thereby. One of Plato's arguments for the existence of God is the universality of such a faith, as indeed always his appeal is to what proves at last to be the deeper common-sense of mankind;<sup>9</sup> and so, in the case of such a dogma as that now questioned, it is important to know that it was not the invention of a solitary thinker, however great his insight and authority, but grew out of the religious sense of a highly

<sup>9</sup> For example, in the *Gorgias* (474A) Socrates, for support of the paradox that it is better to suffer punishment for wrongdoing than to go unpunished, appeals to the individual insight of Polus against the commonly expressed opinion of the world; but in the end it turns out that he is summoning as a witness not the sense of Polus alone but the deeper common-sense of all mankind against their more superficial views.

civilized people. The argument is strengthened if to Greece we add the Egyptians<sup>10</sup> and the Hindus and all that vast section of the East which has taken its religion from India. Metempsychosis, whatever may be said of it otherwise, is not an eccentric or ephemeral belief, but has been, and still is, accepted implicitly by a large and deeply reflective portion of mankind.<sup>11</sup>

As for the second consideration, it is evident that transmigration implies the continuance of the soul after death, and in fact it is in this theological tractate of the *Laws* that Plato develops his final argument for immortality, which we discussed in the third chapter of this work. But, so far at least as the dogma is employed as a theodicy, or justification of Providence, it must imply also, I think, immortality of a personal sort and a continuance of consciousness by memory. Buddha, it is true, taught the doctrine of *Karma*, while refusing to consider the question of a personal entity; yet it is also true that part of the enlightenment of the Buddha himself consisted in a recovery of the memory of all his past exist-

<sup>10</sup> According to Herodotus (ii, 123) the doctrine of transmigration came to Greece from Egypt, but the statement, I believe, is discredited by modern Egyptologists.

<sup>11</sup> Only the other day, talking with an enlightened and highly educated Hindu, I asked whether the men of his class still held to the ancient doctrine of *samsâra*. His reply was unhesitating and emphatic that this was the one thing they never doubted.

ences. Those who have read the *Jâtaka Tales* will know how important this fact was to the religious life of the early community. And however resolutely Buddha waived the abstract question, this recovery of memory shows that practically something corresponding to our notion of personal consciousness was believed to pass on from birth to birth. Plato's position is much the same. However dim our present memory may be of a former existence, however deep the draught of forgetfulness may be which the soul was obliged to take before its transit from the other world to this Meadow of Calamities, yet the past is not all lost. On the contrary, the whole force and moral drive of the Platonic philosophy can be said, in a way, to depend on the soul's faculty of recollection (*amnêsis*). Only by this renewal of vision have we any realization of the realm of Ideas and of our kinship with the gods. And though Plato nowhere states the conclusion categorically, it is not forcing his theories, I think, to maintain that for him, as for Buddha, there comes to the soul with its final enlightenment a complete memory of the whole cycle of its existence and a serene insight into the everlasting justice of the moral law.

Meanwhile, though memory is still dumb from drinking of the river of Lethe, it is possible for us, by what may be termed a kind of anticipatory

recollection, to shape our course here and now in accordance with that law and to grow wise by experience. Prosperity and affliction may checker our days in such a manner that they seem to make a mockery of justice; but it is not really so. For we come to our birth trailing with us the burden of a previous life, and in the rebuilding or neglect of our character we are preparing for a life to follow; our present home in the vast spaces of nature is at once an award for the past and a kind of gymnasium for the future, as if this bondage in the body were not a prison house, as the Orphic enthusiasts were wont to call it, but a house of correction. Plato, we must remember, always thought of punishment as a corrective rather than an act of vengeance; he was even ready to maintain the paradox that it is better to suffer the penalties of wrong-doing than to go unscathed, and that a wise man who had sinned would submit himself voluntarily to condemnation and pains, as we subject a diseased body to the surgeon's knife. And so, in the adventurous journey of rebirth, it is within our choice to take the evils of life sullenly as God's vengeance upon our errors, or to make of them a school for the acquisition of wisdom and peace. In this way the Platonic economy of metempsychosis is in harmony with the Aeschylean doctrine of learning by suffering (*pathei mathos*).



And however strange the details of the theory may sound in our unaccustomed ears, the principle involved is intrinsically easier to accept, less repellent to reason and the innate sense of justice, than the belief in the eternity of a static heaven and hell. A Dante may charm away our repugnance by the magnificence of his poetic imagery and by the depth of his moral emotions, but at bottom his medieval conception of the other world (superficially, but only superficially, relieved by a mediating purgatory) is simply horrible, at least to the judging reason. To comprehend its full enormity we need only peruse such a work as Jeremy Taylor's *Contemplation of the State of Man*, in which the dogma is presented, with the eloquence of conviction, no doubt, but without the mask of poetic symbolism or allegory. "This is our case," he exclaims, "I know not how we are so pleasant; we have never died, we have no experience or skill in a thing of so great difficulty; we are only once to die, and in that all is at stake; either eternity of torments in hell, or of happiness in heaven. . . . O most dreadful point, which art the end of time, and beginning of eternity! O most fearful instant, which shuttest up the prefixed term of this life, and determinest the business of our salvation; how many things are to pass in thee! In the same instant life is to finish, all our works to be

examined; and that sentence given, which is to be executed for all eternity. O last moment of life! O first of eternity! how terrible is the thought of thee!" Terrible indeed if one takes literally, as the preacher meant them to be taken, the picture of the soul standing at the bar of judgment, and the relentless account of the eternal award.<sup>12</sup> If such a conception of the future world were all, it were better, as men have come to do, to thrust out of mind any thought of continuance after death, or else to fall into a sentimental hope of universal salvation which makes a trifle of sin and a mockery of divine justice. Against such a dilemma we may well pause to ask ourselves whether there may not be some adumbration of a deeper truth in the belief in transmigration which has governed the conduct of the most religious people of the Orient and was adopted by the wisest of occidental philosophers.

For certainly Plato accepted the dogma in all seriousness. In it he thought he saw an answer to those who threw up the seeming inequalities of life as a pretext for denying the Providential

<sup>12</sup> For a direct contrast between the Christian scheme with the Platonic metempsychosis, see the fragment *Ex Libro adversus Graecos qui inscribitur Adversus Platonem, De Causa Universi*, attributed to Hippolytus Portuensis. The author describes the undying physical torments of the damned and the eternal physical joys of the blessed with a pious and perfectly lurid realism.

rule of the world. And having disposed by this means of the second of the three atheistical propositions, he was enabled to make short shrift with the third proposition, of those who admitted the fact of Providence, but comforted themselves by hoping that the gods might be bought off from justice by prayers and sacrifice. If men were not responsible for their own fate, if even, as the Christians were to hold, the soul came straight from the hands of God, with its disposition given to it by the fiat of the Creator, then indeed there might be some reason for relaxing the chain of moral cause and effect, and for setting up the mercy of God, or even his easiness of temper, as a mitigation of his so-called justice; but from this perplexity Plato was freed by a scheme which made justice and mercy one, and he could insist with unflinching rigour on the inexorability of the gods. As Providence is the working of God's goodness and wisdom, so his truth and immutability are preserved by the implacable sequences of the moral law.

So much can be said in fairness; nevertheless there is another aspect of the question which must not be entirely overlooked here, though its full discussion belongs rather to another place. The belief in Providence is equally Christian and Platonic; but there is a difference in the emotional use of the doctrine which goes down to the

roots of the religious life, and this difference is dependent, in part at least, on the connexion of Providence on the one hand with the Christian scheme of an eternal static judgment and on the other hand with the Platonic justice of transmigration. Now the logic of our moral sense would seem to lie all on the side of justice against judgment, yet it may still be that in these high matters logic is not the last word. What if the Christian scheme, by its very hardness and unreasonableness, should throw open the door to a divine attribute of mercy to which the human heart can cling as it can never quite cling to the inexorable God of Plato's philosophy? I do not know where in the Dialogues of Plato we should find a place for those sentences of the New Testament which transcend all argument: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." It must be admitted that Platonism here misses certain human qualities without which religion seems, in our weaker hours at least, but a cold consolation. The gods who were worshipped in the Academy do not walk so closely beside us in the darkness of our earthly ignorance, can never understand our needs, or listen so intelligently to our appeals, as does the Comforter who was promised to the disciples of Jesus. And in the

end it may turn out that the Christian dogma, or myth if you prefer, lends to the idea of Providence a depth of meaning which is in the highest degree divine, yet which reason of itself cannot fathom.<sup>13</sup> But this is by the way.

“And thus,” Plato says at the close of Er’s tale of judgment and metempsychosis, “this myth is saved and has not perished, and may save us, if we obey it, and we shall pass over the river of Forgetfulness and shall not sully our soul.” In like manner, at the conclusion in the *Gorgias* of another account of the future life, he declares that no doubt his words will be reckoned an idle myth such as old wives tell, yet this truth at least is involved in them, that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong and that all our care should be directed to being good rather than to seeming. And once again, in *The Republic*, he speaks of the usefulness of mythology in dealing with matters of which we have no certain knowledge and where nothing is left for us but to

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<sup>13</sup> For a philosophical treatment of the Christian view of judgment and mercy I may refer the reader to Clement’s *Quis Dives* §§30, 40, particularly the passage in the former section beginning, θεῶ γὰρ μόνῳ δυνατὸν ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν παρασχέσθαι καὶ μὴ λογίσασθαι παραπτώματα, and the passage in §40 beginning, ὃς μόνος τῶν ἀπάντων οἷός τέ ἐστιν ἄπρακτα ποιῆσαι τὰ πεπραγμένα ἐλέῳ τῷ παρ’ αὐτοῦ. Profounder in its psychology and philosophy is Newman’s sermon on *Peace and Joy amid Chastisement* (*Parochial and Plain Sermons* IV, viii).

shape our fiction as best we can to the hidden truth. It is clear then that, however seriously Plato took the doctrine of metempsychosis, he shows by his resort to mythology that it belongs to a sphere of religion very different from the primary facts of philosophy; we have come a long way from our starting point.

Philosophy has its own justice, discovered in that law of the soul which binds together righteousness and happiness, sin and misery, as the inseparable facts of our conscious being. With the addition of the theological propositions of God and Providence we enter into a new realm of relations which demands that the apparent discrepancies of pleasures and pains shall be brought into harmony with the philosophical law of justice. To Plato the method that seemed to fulfil these conditions for the human soul was the myth of metempsychosis, and on this myth he allowed his imagination to play after the manner of a great poet: "the philomyth is a philosopher," as Aristotle says.<sup>14</sup> The truth Plato sought to make real was about the same as that to which John Stuart Mill came at the end of his days: "All the probabilities in case of a future life are that such as we have been made or have made ourselves before the change, such we shall enter into the life hereafter."<sup>15</sup> The visualization, so to speak,

<sup>14</sup> *Metaph.* I, ii, 8: Διὸ καὶ ὁ φιλόμυθος φιλόσοφος πῶς ἐστίν.

<sup>15</sup> *Three Essays in Religion* 211.

of this truth in the soul's adventure before the judgment seat of the gods and its rebirth in one bodily form or another, is true fiction. "To the clever men of this world such a demonstration will be incredible, to the wise it will bring its own credentials." Phaedrus 245c

Thus, in mythology, which combines with theology and philosophy to round out the religious life, there are two factors to be distinguished: the truth that is clothed upon by the imagination, and the garment itself; the certainty of the moral law embodied and the probability of the particular form of embodiment. A myth is false and reprehensible in so far as it misses or distorts the primary truth of philosophy and the secondary truth of theology; it becomes more probable and more and more indispensable to the full religious life as it lends insistence and reality to those truths and answers to the daily needs of the soul. Perhaps the first requirement of sound religion is just the due recognition of these two elements in mythology, neither on the one hand giving to myth the character of philosophic truth, nor on the other hand carrying over to philosophy the conjectural character of myth. By the former error faith assumes the hard rigidity of fanaticism, until doubts creep in, and then, when the myth has lost its grip upon us, the whole fabric of religion crumbles away together. In the sec-

ond case, by seeing in philosophy nothing different in kind from the probabilities of mythology, we leave faith without any solid foundation; religion may be a useful illusion, to preserve if we can, but it will speak to us without authority or power. It would seem a simple matter to maintain such a distinction; in practice the simplest truths are the most difficult.

Metempsychosis is Plato's mythological treatment of the cosmic destinies of the human soul; it remains to follow him into the greater myth of the cosmos itself.



## CHAPTER VII

### MYTHOLOGY

#### TRANSLATION FROM THE *TIMAEUS*

In the first place, then, in my opinion we must distinguish these two things: What is that which always is and has no becoming,<sup>1</sup> and what is that which, always becoming, never

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<sup>1</sup> Here at the outset we are met by one of those insuperable difficulties which are the despair of the translator. There is no verb in English which conveys the various meanings of *gignomai*, "to become," "to be made," "to be created," "to exist," etc. Furthermore Greek has a whole group of words connected radically with *gignomai*, for which English has no corresponding group derived from a single root. The translator is forced to make what shift he can. His perplexity is increased by the fact that Greek has another group of words connected with *gennaô*, "to beget," "to generate," which in their passive forms run parallel with the group connected with *gignomai*, and can scarcely be distinguished in English. Thus, connected with *gignomai*, we have *genêtos*, meaning "created," while *gennêtos*, connected with *gennaô*, means "begotten," "generated," "born." In the *Timaeus* these two groups are used by Plato with no metaphysical distinction; just as (see *infra*) he speaks of God as the maker (*poiêtês*) and father (*patêr*) of the world. The Christian writers, however, who draw so much of their theology from the *Timaeus*, will base the whole fabric of orthodoxy on a distinction between the world as created (*genêtos*) by God and Christ as begotten (*gennêtos*) by God. Of all these verbal associations and distinctions English can give but the roughest notion.

is? The one, being always the same, we comprehend by thought with reason; the other, becoming and perishing, never really being, we guess at by opinion with unreasoning perception. Now all that becomes does so of necessity by some cause; for it is impossible that anything should have generation without a cause. And it follows that the creator of any object who fashions its form and faculty with his eyes ever set on immutability, and with the immutable as his pattern, of necessity produces a fair work, whatever it be; but if his eyes are set on what has become and he uses this product of generation as a pattern, his work is not fair. And so of the whole round world (cosmos I will call it or whatsoever other name will be most acceptable to it), we should first consider—what lies at the beginning of every consideration—whether it always was, without any beginning in generation, or has become, with its start from some beginning. It has become; for it is visible and tangible and has body, and all such things are sensible, and things sensible, matters of opinion and sense, are phenomena of becoming and generation. And of that which becomes we say there is a necessity that it became by some cause.

No doubt it is hard to discover the maker and father of the universe, and impossible, when discovered, to express him to all men; and here again,

in regard to the world, we are confronted with this consideration: after which of the patterns did the builder fashion it, whether after the immutable and unchanging, or after that which has become? If then this cosmos is fair and the creator good, evidently he had his eyes upon the eternal; but if the contrary (which is sacrilege for any man to say), then upon what has become. Now it is quite clear that his eyes were upon the eternal, since the world is the fairest possible creation, and he is the best of causes.<sup>2</sup> And having been made thus, it was modeled upon that which is comprehensible to reason and thought and upon that which is immutable. Wherefore also it follows quite necessarily that this cosmos is an image of something. Now it is most important that the beginning of any subject should be according to nature. Hence in our distinction of the image and its pattern our discourse should be affiliated to those things of which it is the interpreter. It should be stable and assured when interpreting what is stable and fixed and rationally evident (failing not of that degree of invincible certainty which is possible and proper for discourse); whereas when we deal with that which is but a likeness and image of the immutable, our discourse in the same manner ought to

<sup>2</sup> Thales had said before Plato: *κάλλιστον κόσμος, ποίημα γὰρ θεοῦ.*

be content to aim at likelihood.<sup>3</sup> As being is to becoming, so is truth to belief. If, then, amid the many views that may be held of the gods and the creation of the universe we are unable to make our discourse in every way consistent with itself and exact, there is no reason to wonder; rather, we ought to be content if we can attain a high degree of probability, remembering that I who speak and you who judge have the nature of men, and that it behooves us to accept of these things a story or myth based on likelihood, and to look for nothing beyond.

Let us then declare for what cause the author of the universe constructed it. He was good,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> This distinction between truth, or knowledge, and belief is of the first importance in the study of philosophy and religion. In the great discourse on goodness and the Good which closes the sixth book of *The Republic* and runs into the seventh book, and which may be called the consummation of the Platonic *philosophy*, Plato thought he was dealing with truths of which we have immediate and certain knowledge. In the *Timaeus*, where he is dealing with the same ideas mythically, he is content with a degree of belief or conviction. His word for "belief," *πίστις*, will be used by Christians for a "faith" which is supposed to surpass the knowledge of philosophy.

<sup>4</sup> *Ἀγαθὸς ἦν*. In the conclusion of the sixth book of *The Republic* Plato had come very close, from a confusion of the final and the efficient cause, to identifying God and the Idea of the Good. Here, in his maturer thought, he distinguishes clearly between the two. God, as good, is the efficient cause, the Ideal world, including the Good, is the final cause. Man, as we shall see, is to be like God as an efficient cause in the world.

and in the good there never can be envy of aught. And, being free from this quality, he desired all things to be made as like to himself as possible.<sup>5</sup> This is that sovereign principle of creation and of the cosmos which we most certainly shall be right in accepting from wise men. For God, in his desire that all things should be good and that, so far as possible, there should be nothing evil, took all that was visible as it came to him, lying not in a state of rest but moving without harmony or measure; and out of disorder he brought it into order, thinking such a state altogether better than the other. It was not, nor is it, right that the best agent should produce other work than what is fairest. Accordingly, on consideration, he found that of things by nature visible no work lacking reason would ever be fairer than one with reason,<sup>6</sup> the whole compared with the whole, and that it is impossible for reason to accrue to anything without soul. For this consideration he composed the universe by

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<sup>5</sup> Observe the recurrence of this phrase, "as possible"; it is the mark of dualism, distinguishing Plato's God from the Christian God.

<sup>6</sup> Reason, *νοῦς*, a word not easy to translate owing to its philosophical content. It is in general the "mind," or "intelligence," or even "spirit," as contrasted with sensation and the phenomenal order of things; denoting rather the intuitional or idealistic "reason" than the rationalistic. A little below its cognate, *νοητά*, is translated "of the Ideal order."

fashioning reason in soul, and soul in body,<sup>7</sup> in such a manner as to produce a work fairest and best in nature. So at least, following the probable account, we must say that this cosmos was created as a creature with soul and reason,<sup>8</sup> veritably by the providence of God.

This being settled, our next task is to say in the resemblance of what creature the author of the world constructed it. We will not condescend to any of those creatures that can be classed as partial (since nothing resembling the imperfect can ever be fair), but will suppose that of all creatures it is most like that of which the other creatures are individually and generically parts. For the pattern embraces in itself all creatures of the Ideal order, just as this cosmos embraces us and all other animals that belong to the visible order. And thus, desiring to render it as similar as possible to the most fair and altogether perfect of the Ideal, God fashioned it as one visible creature having within itself all creatures natur-

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<sup>7</sup> This, later, will be the Plotinian evolution of the world from God to *nous*, to *psychê*, to body. But the Neoplatonic conception of emanation, or evolution in this sense, is totally foreign to Plato. *Psychê*, soul, is the whole conscious element of man.

<sup>8</sup> For the influence of this conception of the world as ζῶον ἔμψυχον ἔννοον τε in Plotinus, Origen, St. Augustine, Bruno and Fechner see Inge, *Christian Mysticism* 29. But it is important to note that there is no hint of pantheism in Plato. His God is transcendent, not immanent.

ally akin to it. You ask whether we are right in calling it one universe, or should have spoken more correctly of many or an infinite number? One; since it will have been created according to the pattern. For that which embraces all Ideal creatures could never exist as a second with another; otherwise there would necessarily exist about these two another creature of which they would be part, and this world would be said more properly to have been made like that embracing creature than like the two embraced. In order, then, that in the matter of unity it might be like the perfect creature, the maker made not two worlds or an infinite number of worlds, but this universe exists as one only-begotten, and ever shall exist. . . .

This was the design of the ever-living God concerning the god to be, by which he made it smooth and even, spreading in all directions equally from the centre, a whole and perfect body composed of perfect bodies. And in the midst thereof he set soul, extending it throughout, and even enveloping the body with it round about; and established the one only heaven-bounded world as a sphere revolving in solitude, by reason of its virtue content with its own society and needing no other, known and friendly itself sufficiently to itself. On all these accounts he begot it a happy god.

Now God did not contrive the soul as younger than body, though it appears later as we describe it; for when joining them he would not have permitted the elder to be ruled by the younger. But as we lay hold of things very much by chance and at random, so we speak; whereas he fashioned soul as earlier and elder than body in birth and virtue, to be the mistress and ruler of what was to be ruled, fashioning it from the following elements and in the following manner. From the indivisible and ever immutable essence and from that which becomes divisible by association with bodies, from these two, the nature of the Same and the nature of the Other, he mingled a third form of intermediary essence, and fashioned it in the same way between what was indivisible of them and what was divisible in bodies. And taking these three he mingled them all into one form, forcing the nature of the Other, though hard to mix, into adaptation to the Same. And having mingled the two with the essence and having made one out of the three, he again divided the whole into as many parts as was proper, each part being compounded of the Same and the Other and essence.<sup>9</sup> . . .

<sup>9</sup> By this allegory Plato evidently meant to indicate the dual nature of the soul as akin at once to the eternal and immutable and to the ephemeral and mutable. So far the matter is clear and corresponds with the facts of consciousness. But the attempts to penetrate more deeply into his supposed meaning



When the composition of the soul was finished according to the mind of the maker, thereupon he built up within it all the corporeal, and fitted them together by setting centre to centre. And the soul, inwoven from the centre every way out to the extremity of the heaven-bounded world and enveloping it round from without, so revolving within itself, started upon the divine beginning of endless and rational life for all time. The body of the world was made visible, but the soul herself is invisible, partaking of reason and harmony, by the best of the Ideal and eternal created the best of things begotten. Wherefore, as blended from three elements, from the nature of the Same and the nature of the Other and from essence, and as divided and bound together in due proportion, and revolving itself upon itself, whenever soul comes into contact with anything of scattered essence or with anything of undivided essence, a motion goes all through it, and it announces what things are the same and what are other, and in what relation, place, manner, and time each is to each and is affected by each,

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—to explain rationally the nature of the bond between these two elements and to define the exact status of reason, *nous*, as a part of, or addition to, the soul—have not been illuminating. Plato knew where to stop. In particular, the use of this symbolism by Plotinus should have been a warning to later metaphysicians against the futility of pretending to know what we do not know.

whether in the mutable sphere of becoming or as regards the everlasting and immutable. . . .

And when the Father who begot the world beheld it in motion, as it were a living idol of the eternal gods, he was delighted, and in his pleasure formed the design of making it still more like its pattern. Accordingly, as the pattern happens to be an eternal creature, he undertook to perfect the universe so far as possible in the same way. As I have said, the nature of the creature happened to be eternal, and it was not possible to accord this character in its completeness to what was begotten; but he took thought to make a certain moving image of eternity, and so ordered the heaven-bounded world as to make it an eternal image, moving in number, of the eternity abiding in unity; and this we have named time.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> For a metaphysical discussion of Plato's conception of time see the notes on pages 230 and 231 of Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought*. But I think Plato was not considering time metaphysically, and wisely so. *Quid est ergo tempus*, said Augustine (*Conf.* xi, 14). *Si nemo ex me quaerat, scio; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio*. This is the common sense of a great philosopher. In Plato's mythical account of time, I take it, he is simply expressing the fact of our consciousness of life in succession and mutation and of our consciousness of that which changes not. Vaughan was speaking as a true Platonist when he wrote:

“I saw Eternity the other night  
 Like a great *Ring* of pure and endless light,  
     All calm, as it was bright,  
 And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years  
     Driv'n by the spheres  
 Like a vast shadow mov'd, in which the world  
     And all her train were hurl'd.”

For days and nights and months and years did not exist before the heavens became, but their genesis was contrived by him with the making of the heavens. All these are portions of time, and “was” and “shall be,” as belonging to genesis, are forms of time, which we unwittingly and wrongly impute to the eternal Being. No doubt we use the words “was” and “is” and “shall be,” yet “is” alone pertains to being, if we speak correctly, while “was” and “shall be” are terms that belong properly to the world of becoming which moves in time. For these are of motion; but it behooves not that which is ever immutable and motionless to be becoming older or younger in time, nor yet to become, nor to have become, nor to be in the future, nor in general to suffer anything whatsoever that belongs by becoming to the moving objects of perception,—rather such things are the created forms of time that imitates eternity and revolves by number. . . .

Time, then, was created with the heaven-bounded world, to the end that, being begotten together, they might be dissolved together, if ever there should be a dissolution of them—created after the pattern of the eternal nature, to the end that it might resemble this to the utmost degree possible; for the pattern exists through all eternity, in pure being, and the image exists through all time on and on, yet as generated and being

and about to be. Such were the plan and purpose of God for the generation of time, and thus, for the begetting of time, were created the sun and moon and five other stars called planets, for the division and preservation of the numbers of time. And having made their several bodies, God set them in the orbits which are the course of the circle of the Other, seven stars in seven orbits. . . .

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Up to the generation of time the work of creation took the likeness of that of which it was the image, but it still remained unlike in so far as it did not yet embrace within itself all creatures. And this defect he now made good by moulding it after the nature of the pattern. As reason perceives what and what kind of forms exist in the Ideal creature, such and so many forms he thought this world creature also ought to have. Now there are four classes: one the heavenly race of gods, another winged and living in the air, a third the aquatic species, and a fourth that of the dry land. Accordingly, the form of the divine race he created for the most part of fire, that it might be the fairest to look upon and the most shining; and likening it to the whole he made it spherical, and set it in the orbit of the Same to follow that which is strongest and wisest, distributing it about the whole circle of the firmament, to make of heaven a true cosmos decked out

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in manifold beauty.<sup>11</sup> And to each divine star he gave two motions: the one uniform about its own axis, as its thoughts are ever the same with itself and upon the same things, the other in a forward direction, as each is controlled by the regular revolution of the Same. But in relation to the other five motions<sup>12</sup> he left them unmoved and at rest, in order that each of them might enjoy the highest possible excellence. For such a cause were created all the fixed stars, which abide forever as divine and eternal creatures, revolving in their immutable orbits; whereas the planets that wander and change their place about the ecliptic, were created in the manner aforesaid.<sup>13</sup> And the earth, our nurse, a body globed about the pole stretched through it as an axis, he contrived as the guardian and creator of night and day, the first and eldest of all the gods that have been generated within the heavens. . . .

The generation of the other divinities [daemons] is a matter beyond our saying and know-

<sup>11</sup> Κόσμον ἀληθινὸν αὐτῷ πεποικιλμένον εἶναι καθ' ὅλον. Elsewhere (*Republic* 529c) Plato calls the stars τὰ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ποικίλματα, divine, indeed, and radiant, yet visible and imperfect symbols only of the Ideal spheres, manifestations of what to St. Paul was ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ, "the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii, 10). No English translation can convey the vivid and manifold meaning of the Greek ποικίλος.

<sup>12</sup> Backward, upward, downward, to the right, to the left.

<sup>13</sup> See *ante*, 38c.

ing. Here we must accept the words of those who spake of old, who were the offspring of the gods, as they say, and had clear knowledge of their ancestors—certainly, we cannot disbelieve the children of the gods, though they speak without probable or positive demonstration, but in obedience to the law we must believe their assertion that they speak of things akin to themselves. Thus, then, let us hold and repeat their account of the generation of these gods.<sup>14</sup> Of Earth and Heaven the children were Oceanus and Tethys, from whom sprang Phorcys and Cronos and Rhea and those with them; from Cronos and Rhea sprang Zeus and Hera and all whom we know as their reputed brethren, and from these still other offspring. When, then, all the gods had been generated, both those that move visibly above and those that manifest themselves to us as they desire, he that begot the universe spake to them in this wise:

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<sup>14</sup> According to Oakesmith, *The Religion of Plutarch* 125, this is “a passage charged with the most mordant irony against the national religious tradition”; and so it is understood by other interpreters. I do not feel the irony, and think the words are to be taken quite sincerely. Compare *Philebus* 16c: οἱ μὲν παλαιοί, κρείττονες ἡμῶν καὶ ἐγγυτέρω θεῶν οἰκοῦντες; and see *Phaedrus* 273E. Plato was ready to criticise sharply the immoral stories about the gods, but it was a part of his reverence for tradition to accept rather simply the gods of the pantheon as hints and symbols of the divine power in the world.

“Gods of gods,<sup>15</sup> the works of which I am creator and father, as they were made by me, are indissoluble except by my will. True it is that everything bound can be loosened, yet it is the act of an evil one to will the loosening of that which is well fitted and in good case. Wherefore, since you have been created, you are indeed not absolutely immortal or indissoluble, yet shall you suffer neither dissolution nor the lot of death, since in my will you have a bond still greater and more masterful than those wherewith you were bound together when you were created. Now, therefore, pay heed to what I say and declare unto you. There remain yet unbegotten three mortal races, and until these are created the world will be imperfect; for it will not have within itself all the creature races, as it ought to have if it is to be finished and perfect. But if these were created and partook of life through me, they would be equal to gods. Wherefore, to the end that they may be mortal and that this universe may be truly a universe, do you turn according to nature to the making of the creatures, imitating my power as shown in your generation. Now as to the element in them worthy to be named with the immortals, the divine part and the ruling guide to those of them that are willing ever to follow justice and you—this element it is for me to sow

<sup>15</sup> This I take to be merely an amplified way of saying “Gods!”

and hand over to you as a beginning. For the rest, you shall make and beget them as creatures, weaving the mortal upon the immortal, and you shall cause them to grow by providing food, and shall receive them back when they perish.”

Thus he spake; and again into the bowl wherein before he had mingled and blended the soul of the universe he poured what remained of the divine elements, mingling them in the same general manner, though they were no longer of the same purity but of the second and the third quality.<sup>16</sup> Then, having composed the whole, he divided it into souls equal in number to the stars, and distributed them, one soul to each star.<sup>17</sup> So,

<sup>16</sup> One of the dark, but innocent, passages of Plato that gathered volume and mischief as it was repeated by later metaphysicians. It first recurs in one of the Epistles (ii, 312E) attributed to Plato, where it is already transformed into a kind of mystification in regard to the divine nature. Taken from this source, it plays an immensely important part in the theosophies of the second and third centuries A. D. It would be hard to say how much the Christian doctrine of the Trinity owes to it. See Caesar Morgan, *The Trinity of Plato* 43.

<sup>17</sup> It is a question whether Plato here is thinking of portions of soul-stuff which are to be used by the star-gods in creating individual souls, or of soul already individualized. In the latter case the number of individual souls in the universe would be equal to that of the fixed stars. In either case these souls or portions of soul-stuff are not to be confused with the divine souls who inform the fixed stars and are the secondary gods. Archer-Hind and, apparently, Martin interpret Plato as referring to unindividualized portions of soul-stuff. Synesius, Stewart, and Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, among others, think that



mounting each as in a chariot, he displayed to them the nature of the universe, and told them its fated laws:<sup>18</sup> how that their first incarnation should be ordained the same for all, in order that no one might suffer disadvantage at his hands; how that they must be sown in the organs of time, each in that most suitable to it, and be born as the most God-fearing of creatures, and how that, the nature of humanity being double, the stronger and better part should be the sex hereafter to be called man. And he declared that, when of necessity they had been implanted in bodies which were ever undergoing addition in this part and subtraction in that, there would necessarily be for all of them, first a common innate faculty of sense derived from inevitable affections, secondly love mixed with pleasure and pain, and added to these fear and wrath and all the following

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Plato had in mind individual souls. I am inclined to accept the latter interpretation.

<sup>18</sup> This is the doctrine of reminiscence expressed in a mythical form somewhat different from that of the *Phaedrus*. All that follows: the incarnate birth of the souls in the organs of time (*i.e.* on the earth or one of the planets), their reception back into their starry homes or their transmigration in accordance with their good and evil deeds—all this is to be the work of the secondary gods. But through all the chance and change and obscurity of mortal life, Plato would say, each soul retains a dim recollection of its original purity as it came from the hand of God, and has the power to rekindle that recollection to perfect knowledge.

train of emotions and all of a contrary nature.<sup>19</sup> If they mastered these passions, they should live in justice, but if mastered by these, in injustice. He that lived well the appointed time should pass again to the home of his kindred star, there to enjoy a happy and congenial life. But failing this, he should be changed in his second incarnation to the nature of a woman; and if still in this case he ceased not from wickedness, according to the manner of his evil-doing he should change always to some such bestial nature as resembled the character born within him. Nor should he rest from change and labour until, by conforming to the revolution of the Same and Like within him, with the help of reason he had mastered the great burden that should cling about him from fire and water and air and earth, a turbid and

<sup>19</sup> With this and the corresponding passage at the close of the present translation should be read Swinburne's chorus in the *Atalanta*:

“Before the beginning of years  
 There came to the making of man  
 Time, with a gift of tears,  
 Grief, with a glass that ran;  
 Pleasure, with pain for leaven;  
 Summer, with flowers that fell;  
 Remembrance fallen from heaven,  
 And madness risen from hell;  
 Strength without hands to smite;  
 Love that endures for a breath:  
 Night, the shadow of light,  
 And life, the shadow of death.”. . .

irrational accretion, and so had returned to that most excellent state which he had enjoyed at first.<sup>20</sup> All these laws God established and pronounced to the souls, to the end that he might be guiltless of the evil hereafter incurred by any of them.<sup>21</sup> And thereupon he sowed some of them on the earth, some on the moon, and some upon the other organs of time. And after the sowing he committed to the new gods the moulding of mortal bodies, to create and rule what remained to be added to the soul of man and all that appertains to soul and body, and to govern the mortal creature as fairly and well as they could, in so far as it should not bring evils upon itself by its own responsibility.

Now when he had given all these directions, God abode in his own accustomed character. And as he so abode, his children took thought of their father's order and obeyed it. Taking the immortal beginning of a mortal creature, in imitation of their creator, they borrowed from the cosmos portions of fire and earth and water and air which were to be rendered back, and fastened these together, not with those indissoluble bonds by which they themselves were held together, but by welding the masses with many rivets invisible

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<sup>20</sup> Plato has expressed the same idea more picturesquely in the famous simile of Glaucus (*Republic* 611D).

<sup>21</sup> For God's freedom from the responsibility for evil, compare *Republic* 379C, 617E; *Laws* 900E, 904A; *Theaetetus* 176A, et al.

for smallness. So they made individual bodies out of all these, and bound the revolutions of the immortal soul in a body subject to continual influx and efflux. . . .

[Here follows "a probable account" of the results of this union of the mortal and the immortal, with an explanation of the operation of the senses, particularly vision, the noblest of them all. The story continues:]

46c

All these matters [the material elements of sensation] belong to the auxiliary causes which God uses as means to work out the idea of the best so far as is possible. By the mass of men, however, they are regarded not as auxiliary but as primary causes of all things, as doing the work of creation by cooling and heating, solidifying and dissolving, and the like; though in fact they are incapable of possessing any reason or mind for any purpose. For it must be said that to soul alone belongs the possession of reason (and this is invisible, whereas fire and water and earth and air are all visible bodies); and he who is a lover of reason and knowledge must pursue first the causes belonging to the rational order, and secondly those that are of the order of things moved by other things and so of necessity passing the motion along. And this course we must follow: we must state both classes of causes, but separately those that, working rationally, are

creative of things good and fair, and those that, being destitute of wisdom, produce now and again an unordered work of chance. We have already sufficiently set forth the auxiliary causes by which the eyes possess their faculty; now we must state the greatest blessing which the eyes effect and for which God bestowed them upon us.<sup>22</sup>

In my judgment vision is the cause of the greatest blessing to us, since but for the spectacle of the stars and the sun and the heavens no word of our present discourse about the universe would have been uttered. But now the sight of day and night, of the months and revolving years, the equinoxes and solstices, has brought the invention of number, and has given us the conception of time and our zest to investigate the nature of the universe. From which things we have derived philosophy, than which no greater good has come or will come to mortal men as a gift of the gods. This, I say, is the most blessed use of the eyes. And why should we celebrate the lesser

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<sup>22</sup> There might seem to be some confusion here, since vision and the eyes are not the work of God but of the secondary gods. But the activity of these lower divinities is all under the command and direction of the supreme Father. Indeed, the distinction between God and the secondary gods should not be taken too literally; it is merely Plato's mythological expression of the inscrutable nature of the divine, as in itself perfect to the desire of the imagination yet somehow involved in a creation which is full of imperfection.

blessings, the deprivation of which by blindness even he who is no philosopher would bewail and vainly lament? It is for us to declare the true cause of vision, that God invented it and bestowed it upon us in order that, beholding the revolutions of reason in the heavens, we might use them to the profit of the revolutions of mind within ourselves, as these are akin to those, the perturbed to the unperturbed, and in order that, by learning and by partaking of the right course of thought as displayed in nature, imitating the divine circuits that know no wandering whatsoever, we might bring under control the wandering circuits in ourselves. And of sound and hearing there is a similar account, that they were bestowed on us by the gods for a like purpose and for the like reasons. For speech is ordered to this same end, to which it contributes so large a part; and music, in so far as it uses vocal sound, was granted for the sake of harmony; and harmony, with its motions kindred to the inner revolutions of the soul, is a gift of the Muses to him who brings reason with him to their society, a gift bestowed not for the sake of unthinking pleasure, as now its use seems to be, but as an ally against the discordant revolution of the soul that has arisen within us, to bring it into order and into concord with itself. And rhythm also was given by the Muses for the same purpose, as a supple-

ment for the lack of measure and grace that prevails in most of us.

What we have said hitherto, with slight exceptions, was concerned with exhibiting the things created through reason; but we must now add to our exposition the things that become out of necessity. For the genesis of this cosmos is a mingled birth, a concurrence of necessity and reason; and the beginning was thus: reason got control of necessity by persuading it to bring on most things to their best end as they came into existence; and so and in such manner, by the act of necessity submitting to reasonable persuasion, the universe was composed. If then we would describe truly the origin of this world as it is, we must consider this mixture of the errant cause and the nature of its operation. That is to say, we must go back, and, taking up another first principle involved in the nature of things, proceed again from the beginning in our present exposition as in our former. We must look into the nature of fire and water and air and earth before the genesis of the world, and into the primeval state. Until now no one has ever indicated the manner of their generation, but we talk as if men knew what fire and the rest were, assuming them as the final elements, the alphabet so to speak, of the universe, whereas, properly

speaking, no one who reflected for a moment would represent them as belonging even to the class of syllables.

Our way then lies as follows: it is not our business now to state the [metaphysical] first principle, or principles, however the case may be, underlying all things; and this, if for no other reason, because we have difficulty enough after the manner of our present exposition in dealing with probabilities. Therefore you must not think I ought to enter upon such a discourse, nor could I for my part persuade myself that I should be justified in undertaking so great a task. According then to the rule laid down when we started, that we should be content to aim at likelihood, I will endeavour to make my account of each thing and all things probable, more probable than any other, taking up the subject again from the beginning. And so, once more with a prayer to God the saviour that he may guide us through a strange and unfamiliar discourse to the safe opinion of probability, let us start afresh.

In beginning anew our exposition of the universe we must distinguish more broadly than before. Then we made a double classification, but now we must indicate a third class. For our former argument the two kinds were sufficient, one the hypothesis of a pattern, belonging to the realm of intelligible and immutable being, the



other an imitation of the pattern, created and visible. We did not then distinguish a third kind, deeming the two would be sufficient; but now our argument seems to force upon us a dim and difficult kind which we must try to bring before you. What function, then, and nature should be attributed to it? This, I suppose, that it is the receptacle and as it were nurse of all creation. . . .

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But we must endeavour to give a clearer account of the matter. Suppose a man were to mould all kinds of shapes out of gold, continually changing one shape into another; then suppose we should point to one of these and ask him what it was. Far the safest and truest answer for him would be to say that it was gold, and not to speak of the triangle or any other shape into which he had moulded it as of a thing really being, since these shapes are changing even while he names them; and he should be content if an object can be called such or such [rather than actually this or that]. Now the same account holds good of the nature that admits all sorts of corporeal forms. It must itself be spoken of as always the same; for it does not in the least depart from its own function—rather it admits all things without ever itself in any way merging into a form like any of those that enter into it. As the natural recipient of any impression it lies there, moved and transfigured by the enter-

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ing forms and appearing always different because of these; but the forms that enter and pass out are imitations of the eternal realities, copied from them in a manner wonderful and hard to explain, which we shall consider at another time. For the present at least we need only bear in mind the three kinds: that which becomes, that in which it becomes, and that from which the becoming takes its likeness. Further, we may liken the recipient to a mother, that from which to a father, and the nature between these to a child; and we may understand that, if there is to be a copying such as to present every variety of appearance, the recipient in which the copy arises cannot be rightly constituted unless it is itself without any of those forms it is to receive from without. . . .

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Therefore the mother and receptacle of this visible and otherwise perceptible world of creation we will call neither earth nor air nor fire nor water, neither anything created out of these nor anything from which these are created; but shall not err if we call it a separate kind, invisible and formless, all-receiving, and in some most extraordinary manner partaking of the Ideal and intelligible, itself utterly incomprehensible. So far as we can arrive at its nature from our preceding arguments, the best way to speak of it would be this: that part of it which at any time is enkin-

dled appears as fire, that which is liquified as water, and as earth and air when it receives the likeness of these.

But we must go further in our analysis of this matter. We must ask ourselves whether there is such a thing also as fire in itself, that is to say the Idea of fire, and so of the other things of which we are in the habit of predicating absolute existence; or are these objects which we perceive with the eyes and with the other bodily organs alone existent and the only reality, and is there nothing in any way existent beyond? Do we merely deceive ourselves when we speak of the intelligible Idea of anything as really existent, since it is no more than a conception of the mind or a fashion of speech? Now our dilemma is that we cannot leave the present question unjudged and undecided, merely affirming positively that Ideas do exist, nor can we add another long excursus to an argument already too long. If any definition should occur to me, broadly inclusive yet briefly expressed, it would be most opportune for our purpose; and in lieu of such I propose my own conviction as follows: If intuition<sup>23</sup> and true opinion are two things different in kind, then do the unchangeable Ideas surely exist as objects of intuition alone, not perceptible by our

<sup>23</sup> The Greek word is *nous*. A few lines below the Greek for "reason" is *logos*.

senses; but if, as some hold, true opinion differs in nothing from intuition, then all we perceive by our bodily organs must be regarded as having the most real existence. Now we must declare them to be of two kinds, since their origin is different and their nature unlike. One of them arises in us by instruction, the other by persuasion; one is always associated with true reason, the other is irrational; one is not movable by persuasion, the other can be changed by persuasion; of true opinion every man may be said to partake, but intuition is the portion of the gods and of a small number of men. If what I say is correct,

52 then we must admit there is first the kind of being that exists immutably, unbegotten and imperishable, neither receiving into itself anything else from without nor itself passing into anything else, but invisible and altogether imperceptible to the senses, that kind of being which we contemplate with the reason. And there is a second kind, of the same name as the first and similar to it, perceptible, begotten, forever in motion, becoming in a certain place and again perishing thence, comprehensible by opinion with the aid of perception. And there is still a third kind, that of everlasting space, which suffers no destruction but offers a place for the genesis of all things, itself palpable to a certain sort of bastard reasoning without true perception, a matter of

belief and scarcely that. It is because our gaze is turned to this third kind that we say, as if in a state of dreaming, that everything which is must necessarily be in some place and occupy some space, that what is not on the earth or somewhere in the heavens is nothing. All these notions and others of like sort we transfer to the nature of that which truly is and sleeps not, being unable because of our dream-state to arouse ourselves to the true distinction; for we ought to say that as an image has no existence in its own right but is merely the moving phantasm of something else, so it properly comes to existence in something else, clinging to being as it may, if it is to be at all; whereas for the confirmation of that which really is we have this exact and true reason, that so long as there is a final distinction between two things one of them cannot come into existence in the other in such a way that the same thing shall be at once one and two.

[Here follows an account of the creation and properties of the four elements, earth, water, air, and fire: how, by means of the imposition of geometrical forms upon the unformed and ever restlessly moving substratum, there is evoked out of chaos a material cosmos, ordered and law-abiding and beneficent in so far as the goodness of God prevails by persuasion over what in its own nature is intractable and lawless.]

68E

Such then was the nature of all these products of necessity, and as such the creator of what should be fairest and best in the realm of becoming took them when he begot the self-sufficient and most perfect god [*i.e.* the heaven-bounded world], using the causes at work in them as his servants, but himself contriving the end of goodness in all things created. Wherefore we must discriminate between two kinds of cause, the one of necessity, the other divine: and the divine cause we must seek in all things, to the end that we may possess a happy life so far as our nature permits; and the necessary cause for the sake of the divine, reflecting that otherwise we cannot apprehend by themselves those truths which are the object of our serious study, nor grasp them or in any other way partake of them. . . . As then we said in the beginning, God, taking these things in their disorder, introduced proportions into each to the end that so far as possible they might be analogous and proportionate in themselves and to one another. For hitherto they had had no share in these qualities, except by chance, nor did they have any claim to the names we now give them, viz. fire and water and the rest; but first he brought all these things into orderly existence, and then out of them composed the universe as one creature having within itself all creatures mortal and immortal. He himself is the creator

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of the divine, but the creation of the mortal he laid upon his offspring to accomplish. And they, in imitation of his act, took from him the immortal element of the soul, and then fashioned about it a mortal body, and gave her all the body as a vehicle; and in it they framed also another kind of soul, which is mortal, having in itself dreadful and compelling passions—pleasure first, the greatest incitement to evil, then pains that frighten away good, and besides these confidence and fear, witless counsellors both, and wrath hard to appease, and alluring hope. Having mingled these with irrational sensation and with love that stops at nothing, they composed as they could the mortal soul of man.

[The remainder of the dialogue deals in more detail with the creation of the mortal elements of the soul and with the fashioning of the body. It contains also a discussion of health and disease, and a brief consideration of the rules for an harmonious development of this union of soul and body which conditions our present life.]

## CHAPTER VIII

### MYTHOLOGY: THE CREATION

If we have been right in our interpretation, Plato's philosophy grows out of a sense of dualism as the central fact of man's ethical experience.

625E

As he says in the first book of the *Laws*, all cities are by nature in a state of continual warfare with all other cities, and this warfare extends to the citizens of the same city, and further to the in-

626E

ternal life of the individual man. "And that is the first and greatest victory when a man is victor over himself, as that is the basest and most evil condition when a man is defeated by himself."<sup>1</sup>

We are still within the bounds of philosophy when the object of this victory is made the Idea of the Good, regarded as an entity outside of the soul, which plays a dominant part in our moral life as the final cause of our being. We pass to theology when, as in the preamble to the *Laws*, the

906A

<sup>1</sup> This is the Hobbian state of nature in which all men are at enmity with one another, carried down to the original "warfare within the cave." With Plato, however, the remedy for this evil is not a mechanical transference of rights by contract to a monarch in whom the will of society is centred, but must come through the victory of right over wrong, of the higher self over the lower, beginning with the individual man and so extending to society.



gods are brought into the warfare as personifications, or manipulators it might better be said, of the Good: "The heavens are filled with powers of good, many in number, and with contrary powers, more numerous still than the good; and now we say that we are involved with these in a deathless battle needing a marvellous guard, and that the gods and daemons are our allies." The further step to mythology is taken when the procedure of the divine Providence is described in detail as preparing for men a judgment seat and as guiding men upwards, so far as they suffer themselves to be guided, by the pathway of birth and rebirth. In this last stage the essential truth of philosophy as a concern of the individual soul, is rendered vivid and convincing by clothing it in the imaginative garb of fiction—fiction which yet may be only a veil, more or less transparent, through which we behold the actual events of the spirit world; and this aid of the imagination is needed just because the dualism of consciousness cannot be grasped by the reason, demands indeed a certain abatement of that rationalizing tendency of the mind which, if left to itself, inevitably seeks its satisfaction in one or the other form of monism.<sup>2</sup>

But there is another, yet similar, use of the

<sup>2</sup> For the all-important rôle of reason in conduct and the practical affairs of life see *Platonism* 114 *et passim*.

imagination whereby the problem is considered not so much from the side of the individual human soul as from that of the gods who take part in the eternal warfare of good and evil. How shall we present to ourselves the cosmic dualism which corresponds, we are bound to believe, with the dualism of our consciousness? Here again it is of the very nature of the question that it cannot be satisfactorily answered by reason, that reason, if left to her own devices, will not be content with arguing from, but will attempt to explain away, the facts which give rise to the question. The only practicable method of dealing with the matter is by means of mythology; and in the *Timaeus* Plato has appended what may be called a cosmic story of creation to his theology, as a complement to his psychic myth of metempsychosis and judgment.

Now the very structure of the *Timaeus* is significant. As is usual with him, Plato is careful to mark here the divisions of his argument by skillfully prepared transitions, and one can see at a glance that the dialogue is divided into an introduction, and then into two main sections extending respectively from 27D to 47E and from 47E to the end. The subject of both these main sections is the creation and ordering of the visible universe, but this work is regarded from two different angles. In the first section the point of

view is from above, so to speak; we are looking upon creation as a divine effect and as fulfilling a divine purpose, and it is noteworthy that both matter and soul are considered here under the laws and symbols of number and time and motion, that is subjectively. In the second section the point of view is inverted, and the work of creation is seen from below, still as a divine product, but as conditioned by the material out of which it is framed and under the objective laws and symbols of space and geometrical form. Again, each of these two main sections is subdivided. The first subdivision of each section (extending respectively from 27D to 42E and from 47E to 69A) deals with the activity of God, the Demiurge ("maker," "artificer," "creator"), while the second subdivision of each section (from 42E to 47E and from 69A to the end) tells what is done by the lesser gods under the command of the Demiurge.

The further articulation of the dialogue—or narration it might be called more exactly, since the account of creation is all in the mouth of one speaker—by prologues, transitions and epilogues is interesting as bearing on Plato's rhetorical art, but need not detain us now. The point to observe is that the clear dichotomy of form suggests immediately a corresponding dichotomy of thought underlying the whole argument. And this sur-

27D  
 mise is confirmed by the plain statement made at the opening of the narration: "In the first place, then, in my opinion, we must distinguish these two things: What is that which always is and has no becoming, and what is that which, always becoming, never is? The one, being always the same, we comprehend by thought with reason; the other, becoming and perishing, never really being, we guess at by opinion with unreasoning perception." Thus, in a couple of sentences, Plato lays down this summary of his philosophical dualism as the foundation of his mythological superstructure; and he clinches its importance by repeating the same statement early  
 51D  
 in the second of the main sections.

In the first main section of the narrative we have then, the dualism of knowledge and opinion carried on into the objective realm of Ideas and phenomena. Many times in the earlier dialogues Plato had discussed the relation of these two orders of existence, asking himself how in essence they could remain absolutely distinguished yet could be interactive, and he had found no solution of the problem: "participation," "imitation," and the like were only names for an association which it was necessary to assume but which eluded all rational explanation. In the *Parmenides* he had ended by denying the right of metaphysics to meddle with the matter at all. Now, in the

*Timaeus*, he will cut the Gordian knot with the sword of mythology; and by giving the name of God to what may be regarded as the dynamic element in Ideas, and thus separating God as good from the Idea of goodness, will be able to speak of phenomena as the handiwork of a creator who fashions this visible world after an Ideal pattern. So the hint thrown out in the *Sophist*, that there is a certain faculty (or power, *dynamis*) in Ideas, by which they work down into phenomena, is developed into a splendid allegory of creation.

247E

But creation could not be with a Greek philosopher, as it was to be with the Christians, an evocation of something out of nothing by a mere word of fiat: "creation," indeed, in our sense, is rather a misnomer for what is more properly an act of fashioning or shaping. To Plato the thought of a creator and a thing created implied necessarily the presence of a substance out of which the object is created. Hence the initial dualism of Ideas and phenomena must be completed by the addition of a third order of existence, to which he gives a variety of names: space, the receptacle, the recipient of impressions, the nurse or mother, the invisible and shapeless kind, necessity. And as being and becoming, Ideas and phenomena, are the objective terms of knowledge and opinion, so this third order cor-

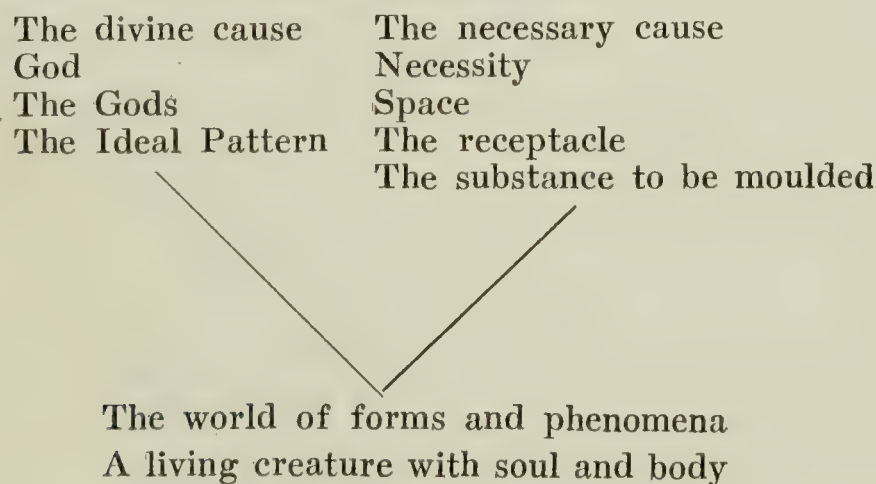
responds to a faculty of the soul that is neither knowledge nor opinion, but a sort of infrarational intuition:

“If what I say is correct, then we must admit there is first the kind of being that exists immutably, unbegotten and imperishable, neither receiving into itself anything else from without nor itself passing into anything else, but invisible and altogether imperceptible to the senses, that kind of being which we contemplate with the reason. And there is a second kind, of the same name as the first and similar to it, perceptible, begotten, forever in motion, becoming in a certain place and again perishing thence, comprehensible by opinion with the aid of perception. And there is still a third kind, that of everlasting space, which suffers no destruction but offers a place for the genesis of all things, itself palpable to a certain sort of bastard reasoning without true perception, a matter of belief and scarcely that.”

But it is important to note that the real transition is not from a dyad to a triad, but from one dyad to another, from the contrast, that is to say, between being and becoming to the more radical contrast between being and what, by virtue of its native disorder and unrest and formlessness, might be designated as a kind of not-being, or, in the terminology of the *Sophist*, a kind of absolute “otherwiseness.” The fundamental conception of the dialogue is still dualistic: there are two causes,

or substances, not three, and the visible world in which our life passes is a commingling of these, a realm of appearances hovering between the two extremes of true and bastard reality. We shall quite miss the purpose of Plato's mythological scheme if we refuse to recognize the radical dualism underlying the superficial dualism of being and becoming, or are seduced by rationalism to substitute any form of monism for it or to explain it away by any Hegelian juggling of terms. The conception of the world as born from the coming together of the two causes is in no sense of the word a rationalizing reconciliation of contraries, but a mythological elaboration of the fact of consciousness that in our one person two contrary and irreconcilable natures coexist.<sup>3</sup>

The theme of the *Timaeus*, then, presented schematically would appear thus:



<sup>3</sup> In a later volume we shall see how this same truth of philosophy forms the basis of the Chalcedonian Definition of the one person and two natures of Christ.

Now examining the higher, or divine, cause a little more closely, we first observe that the word God (*theos*), in accordance with the genius of the Greek language, has a fluidity of meaning which it is difficult for us, with our habit of speech, to follow. Our "God," even more rigidly than the *Deus* of Latin theology, is reserved for the one supreme Being, and it would strike us as sacrilegious to use it of any other being. But it is not so in Greek. The word *theos* is applied quite freely by the Hellenistic Fathers, after the manner of the philosophers, to men, and, in general, is equivalent loosely to the divine quality, more specifically to the immortal, wherever it occurs.<sup>4</sup> Hence we shall not be surprised to find a similar fluidity in Plato's terminology for the higher cause. Generically, as distinguished from the other extreme, this higher cause is the divine, the godlike (*to theion*). But the divine as a cause may be taken in two ways, as the active and personal and as the passive and formal, as the creator and as the Ideal pattern after which he models the work of creation.

<sup>4</sup> Dean Inge, in his *Christian Mysticism* (Appendix C), has called attention to this extraordinary fluidity of the word. So, to note one or two illustrations not given by him, Origen, *In Joan.*, Fragm. 2, says, Ἐκείνους θεοὺς εἶπεν πρὸς οὓς ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγένετο (cf. John x, 35), and Gregory Nazienzen, *Theol. Or.* 4, says, Μεθ' ἧν ἴσταται (ὁ Χριστὸς) θεὸς ἐν μέσῳ θεῶν, τῶν σωζομένων, διακρίνων καὶ διαστέλλων, τίνος ἕκαστος τιμῆς καὶ μονῆς ἄξιος.



Furthermore, conformably with the free manner of Greek theology, the personal cause is regarded now as the one God, and now polytheistically as a company of lesser gods. For the most part this distinction between God and the lesser gods is carried out consistently in the *Timaeus*. To the former is ascribed the initial formative act of creation and the fabrication of the world as a whole, as a mortal creature fashioned of soul and body and embracing within itself all individual creatures; whereas to the lesser gods is left the task of completing the work by the creation and government of these individual creatures, including man. But the distinction is occasionally forgotten, and particularly in the second subdivision of the second main section the terms God and gods are employed almost indiscriminately where by strict propriety only gods should be found. In fact, the distinction between God and gods is rather artificial than essential with Plato, and has no great significance. His chief reason for making it at all would appear to be that, by limiting the contact of God to the universe regarded as a whole and subject to the uniformity of law, he may separate the divine goodness more reverently from the irregularities which seem to belong rather to the individual members of the system; God, he says, repeating the dictum of *The Republic*, is not responsible

*Timaeus* 42D  
*Republic* 617E

for the evils to be. Yet, after all, these lesser artificers merely follow out the commands of their Father, and their formal subordination to him is not much more than a convenient fiction for the fact that we cannot comprehend the relation between a perfect creator and an imperfect creation.<sup>5</sup>

In regard to the other aspect of the divine cause, viz. the Ideal pattern (*paradeigma*) to which God looked while framing the phenomenal world, opinions have differed: did it have a real existence outside of the mind of the creator, or was it merely the conception or plan within his mind? To Philo, the Platonizing Jew, with his thought of God as all in all, only the second of these interpretations was possible. "So also," he says, "we must think of God, that, having in mind to create the great city of the universe, he first conceived its outlines, from which he fashioned an intelligible (Ideal) world, and then, with this as his pattern, executed the sensible world. As therefore the city as it is first outlined in the architect occupies no place outside but is an impression in the soul of the artist, in the same manner the world composed of Ideas would have no other place than the divine reason which or-

<sup>5</sup> In Numenius and the later Pythagorizing philosophers generally Plato's loose attempt to exonerate his supreme deity becomes petrified into a rather mischievous metaphysical system.

dered these things; for of his powers (or faculties, *dynameis*) what other place would there be, capable of admitting and holding, I will not say all these powers, but any one of them in its purity?"<sup>6</sup>

This conception of Philo's has at least the merit of simplicity and clearness, and it was readily assimilated by the Christian interpreters of Plato who sought the beginning and source of all things in God alone. In such a belief, so long as it remains consistent with itself, justice and righteousness and beauty should be simply the will of God; what he decrees arbitrarily, that is good, and Goodness is only another name for God's being. Evil by the same token has no meaning except as disobedience to His will.<sup>7</sup> But certainly such a belief cannot be reconciled with the language of Plato. I have already referred<sup>8</sup> to the passage of the *Euthyphro* in which he argues that the moral Ideas are distinct from the will of God, and in a manner superior to it. And so in the *Timaeus* he is careful not to confuse God, who as a personal creator is good and free from envy, with the pattern of Goodness which guided

<sup>6</sup> *De Opificio Mundi* §§4, 5.—According to Reitzenstein (*Poimandres 45 et al.*) this Philonic conception may be found in the Hermetic literature of the age, and may have roots in Egyptian mythology.

<sup>7</sup> See chapter ii, note 4.

<sup>8</sup> See *ante*, page 41.

his hand in the work of creation. I do not say that such a distinction is without difficulties; for if God is good, there is goodness in his mind, and it is at least puzzling to understand how this subjective goodness is different from Goodness in itself. But this is an embarrassment that haunts the whole doctrine of Ideas: it can be answered only by showing how the contrary theory (*i.e.* that Ideas do not exist separately) is beset with more disastrous logical consequences. In general the error of Philo may be described as an undue subordination of Plato's philosophy to his theology. Echoes of it may be heard among the interpreters of today; but the more fashionable mode among scholars educated in an idealism of Teutonic stamp is rather to subordinate, or virtually eliminate, Plato's theology, and to regard the word God as merely a loose or popular expression for the Idea of the Good. Thus, to take the latest, and not the least learned, of the commentators, Prof. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff holds that, despite Plato's senile concession to the popular religion, "his God remained to the end the Good, True, Beautiful, which penetrates, moves, and vitalizes all, a Godhood which we love, yet with no desire that it should love us in return, like the Godhood of Spinoza." And elsewhere, in language approaching the dithyrambic, he lauds the conclusion of the sixth book of *The Re-*

*public* as “the moment in which Plato conceived the Idea of the Good as his God.” This was “Plato’s way of bestowing upon mankind a new religion through science.”<sup>9</sup> Now I am ready to admit that the language of this one passage of *The Republic*, taken alone, lends support to such a theory; but even here the Good is set forth rather as the teleological than the efficient cause: that is to say, it is the purpose of creation, the goal towards which all our being and all the world’s being should be directed, and hence in a way above being, exactly as in the *Timaeus* the Ideal world is the pattern towards which the phenomenal world, so far as this is possible, shall be shaped and guided. Elsewhere in *The Republic* the language used of God and the gods is of such a character as to make their identification

<sup>9</sup> *Platon* I, 583, 419, 408.—For a full presentation of the view held by Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and most of the other modern commentators see Wilhelm Biehl’s *Idee des Guten bei Platon*. An excellent brief statement of it will be found in Baron von Hügel’s *Mystical Element of Religion* II, 311. Both Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and Baron von Hügel appeal to *Philebus* 22c as the strongest support of their contention. Plato is there arguing the question whether pleasure or intellect is the chief cause of that happy life which is our *summum bonum*. Pleasure, which Philebus worships as a god, cannot, he says, be such a cause; nor can the imperfect human reason be such a cause, though the true and divine reason may be. I cannot see that the passage means more than this. I may admit, however, while on this subject, that my own language in *Platonism* 201 needs correction, or at least modification.

with impersonal Ideas almost a wilful perversion of Plato's plain meaning. Rightly understood, there is not a word in this dialogue that indicates any discrepancy here between his philosophy and the mythology of the *Phaedrus*, the *Symposium*, the *Politicus*, and the *Timaeus*.<sup>10</sup>

These two modes of interpretation, one absorbing Plato's philosophy in his theology, the other absorbing his theology in his philosophy, though seemingly contrary, really come together in the end.<sup>11</sup> As they prevail today, they both descend by circuitous ways from the Plotinian metaphysic of a supreme Unity out of which proceeds the Ideal realm of intelligence (*nous*) and

<sup>10</sup> In the discussion of art in the tenth book of *The Republic* God is said to be the maker of the table itself as it is in nature (*i.e.* the Idea of the table), whereas the table made by the carpenter is an imitation of this, while the work of the painter is only an imitation of an imitation. Now, in the first place, whatever is meant by this passage, it lends no support to the identification of God with Ideas or with any Idea. Nor do I believe that Plato really meant to contradict his constant view of ethical Ideas as in a way prior logically to God, as for instance in the allegory of the *Phaedrus* (249c: *πρὸς οἷσπερ θεὸς ὧν θεῖός ἐστιν*). Plato is leading up to the distinction between the man who actually practices virtue and the man who, as play-actor or otherwise, merely simulates the practice of virtue. Hence the three spheres (*Republic* 597B): the Ideas themselves of which God is lord or overseer, the conduct of human life as modeled upon Ideas, and the pretence of such conduct.

<sup>11</sup> They do virtually coalesce in Archer-Hind's introduction to the *Timaeus*.

the intelligible (*to noêton*). It makes no great difference whether the terminology adapted to such an abstract Unity assumes a theological or a philosophical cast; in either case the practical discriminations of philosophy and theology and mythology are engulfed in the abyss of the absolute. I cannot see how the clear distinction between the Demiurge and the Ideal pattern in the *Timaeus* can be lost or glossed over without emasculating the religion of Plato. Nor is it any withdrawal from this position to admit that a certain penumbra of obscurity is left, intentionally perhaps, about both these conceptions. As in the preamble to the *Laws* Plato's language wavered between a philosophical monotheism and a recognition of isolated manifestations of the divine vaguely grasped by the popular imagination, so his terminology varies, with only a little less indecision, in the *Timaeus*. But of the being of God or gods, rather of God and gods, personal and very real, now withdrawn from mortal ken and now haunting some scene of this earth, even appearing manifestly as strange visitors among men, governing the great world and always attentive to human needs,—of this truth he exhibits no doubt at all. In the same way the nature of the Ideal world cannot be defined; but it is there, open to the eyes of the gods, and to the eyes of men if they will see. All things are

there, not imperfect as they are here, but as they would be if freed from the distorting thrust and pull of the nether world.

It might seem that for the moment Plato had forgotten his own distinction when he speaks of the gods themselves, as having an existence in the Ideal world. That is possibly only another way of expressing what the divine power would be where no limitations were imposed upon its ministry. Rather, I think, it signifies that gods and Ideas both belong to that general conception of the divine, not as something above both and annulling their difference, but as a name embracing both and answering to the dimness of our understanding. In like manner this world is said more precisely to be fashioned after the Ideal pattern; yet in looser language Plato may speak of it as an image of the eternal gods, or as made to resemble the good God, or even as itself the god to be and a blessed god. Is this laxity of thought? Possibly; but still more I take it to be a reflection of the strange paradox that in one sense the only knowledge we possess is of the divine, yet of this knowledge our reason can give but a faltering account. Our highest assurance is conditioned on humility. "God, as the ancient saying is, holding the beginning and the end and the middle of all things that are, moves straight on to his goal by the seemingly devious ways of nature;

39E

37C

29E

34A

Laws 715E



and with him follows always Justice, the avenger of those that depart from the divine law. To this Justice he that will be happy clings, and follows with her, humble and chastened." Such is the preface to Plato's theology, and his myth of creation calls for a deeper humility and a more chastened spirit.

At the other extreme from the divine cause stands the necessary cause, which, again, like the divine, is regarded now as passive and now as active. In its passive aspect it receives many names, all mere approximations for the dark reality. It is called space; but it is not absolute emptiness of being which the word signifies when taken literally, for it is also likened to the mass or substance which is recipient of impressions. It is not matter, in so far as by matter we mean a body perceptible to our senses and classifiable by reason; rather it is the potentiality of matter before the elements have come into being. Yet again it is not motion, or the principle of motion, regarded as a calculable, continuous operation, for such motion is the property of soul. Itself it is invisible and formless, the receptacle and mother of all visible forms, and that out of which such forms proceed, the disorder underlying all order. One might think of it as the inverted Idea, known to us by a kind of reluctant necessity of reason or bastard intuition.

In its active capacity, considered not merely as a blank recipient of the forms of matter but as an ever-restless power imposing certain inevitable conditions upon creation, this dark substratum of existence, set over against and in a manner opposed to the active element of the divine, is called more specifically Necessity (*anankê*), a necessity which, having in itself no purpose or design, being in fact the last irreducible resistance to design, is virtually synonymous with Chance.

So we have God and the Ideal pattern at one extreme of being, and at the other extreme Necessity and the flux of chaos. Between them the process of creation would be something like this. When the creator took upon himself the task of framing a cosmos, he found as it were traces and hints of the elements in the abyss of chaos, lying in such haphazard state as would be expected of things without god. They were not yet properly the elements with settled laws and relations one to the other, nor could they rightly be called by specific names, save as for a moment, by some accident of mutation, they seemed to rest in this or that form. Here, in this potentiality of chance, so to speak, was the open door for the entrance of design. “For the genesis of this cosmos is a mingled birth, a concurrence of necessity and reason; and the beginning was thus: reason got control of necessity by persuading it to bring

on most things to their best end as they came into existence; and so and in such manner, by the act of necessity submitting to reasonable persuasion, the universe was composed." In more modern terms creation would be described as a process of evolution by the interaction of chance and design. In the infinite combinations of brute nature certain forms or approximations to form are thrown out, but with no power of persistence or cohesion. On these the creator, or the hidden Purpose, lays hold, and, so far as the yielding nature of necessity permits (that is, in so far as chance may be governed), combines them gradually into a world of ordered relations. In such manner, as the disorder of chance yields to design, necessity is transformed into physical law as this is known to science and is formulated in mathematics;<sup>12</sup> but it is still a necessity rooted in chance, and to Plato at least science is never more than an approximation to knowledge, dealing with approximate laws, a venture into the delightful realm of probabilities. Plato's theory of creation thus harmonized the two views which, separated, were to form the basis respectively of Epicurean and Stoics physics, the one attempting to account for the nature of things by pure chance and the mechanical law (whence derived?)

56c

59c

<sup>12</sup> See the hint thrown out *Republic* 458D, with James Adam's note, and compare *Timaeus* 69A.

of probability, the other seeing everywhere only design and no chance at all in the universe. -

So interpreted, Plato is an optimist of a sort, but certainly not an optimist as the word is ascribed to the philosophy of Leibnitz. The point is of some importance in its ethical bearing. In the Continuation of the Dialogue of Laurentius Valla and in the Controversy with Bayle, which form sections of the *Theodicy*, Leibnitz tells in an allegory how a certain Theodore is carried by the goddess of wisdom to the Palace of Destinies, where he beholds as it were piled up in a pyramid samples of all conceivable worlds, at the apex the best possible world and from this extending downwards in infinite series ever less perfect worlds. These are the Ideas on which the creator looked, and from which in his infinite goodness and power he selected the point of the pyramid as the model of the phenomenal world to be created. To those, then, who ask why there is evil in a universe so created by an omnipotent God in the likeness of a perfect pattern, the reply is that the best choice is not always that which avoids evil, since it may be that the evil brings with it a greater good. We know from mathematics and otherwise that an imperfection in the part may be required for a greater perfection in the whole. St. Augustine has said a hundred times that God permitted evil in order

to draw from it a greater good; and Thomas Aquinas also declares that the permission of evil tends to the good of the universe. So the fall of Adam was a *felix culpa*, a happy and fortunate sin, since thereby the Incarnation has brought to mankind a higher blessing than otherwise they could have enjoyed.

That is optimism properly so called; it is the contrary of everything that Plato meant to convey in the myth of the *Timaeus*. By his "necessary cause" Plato did not mean that evil was the necessary condition or cause of good, but that it was simply evil, actual and inexplicable, and so, as one might say, necessary. In the Ideal world there is no imperfection, no "best possible," but absolute good; and if evil and imperfection are discovered in the copy, as indeed they are not discovered but thrust upon our gaze, that is because there is a something intrinsically evil, a dark and undiscoverable power, which breaks the perfect execution of the design. Plato was not trying to justify God by minimizing, or virtually denying, evil in the world, but was dressing a fact in the symbols of the imagination. Our world is not simply the best possible, but the best possible under the given conditions.

The physical details of this phenomenal world, so composed, belong rather to science than to religion, and I have omitted most of them in my

translation of the *Timaeus*. But what of soul, and what is its place in the scheme? This is a question vital to Plato's religion, but avowedly difficult to answer.

69c  
et al.

726

69E ff.

In the first place we observe a distinction between the immortal soul and the mortal, or between the immortal and the mortal parts of the soul, which points at once to a psychic dualism corresponding to the cosmic dualism of the myth. As it is said in the little sermon on the soul in the preamble to the *Laws*: "To every man his all is dual." But this simple dichotomy is complicated by another division of the soul, following the psychology of *The Republic*, into three faculties, or modes of activity, viz. reason (*nous*), the emotions (*to thymoeides*), and the concupiscence (*to epithymêtikon*); and it is not clear at a glance how these two divisions, the dual and the tripartite, are to be reconciled. The first adjustment would be to reckon the two lower faculties together as the mortal part, and to separate reason from them as the immortal; and this arrangement is correct in so far as the emotional and concupiscent faculties certainly belong to what is mortal in the soul. But with reason the problem is not so simple. To begin with, reason has a double function, as it is concerned with both the Same and the Other, that is to say with what is permanent and invariable, and with what is always

35A  
36c  
37A

changing and never abiding. In other words there is a division within reason corresponding to the distinction between the knowledge of things that are (Ideas) and the opinion of things that seem (phenomena) which made the starting point of the whole argument of the dialogue, and which indeed runs like a guiding thread through all of Plato's philosophy. Now as possessing knowledge and being akin to the immutable objects of eternity reason is manifestly eternal; and in this belief we are confirmed by the statement that then only shall the immortal part of a man be freed from the hazards of an ever-changing and perturbed existence and be restored to its celestial home, when it has been schooled by philosophy to move in harmony with the unvarying revolutions of the Same as these are seen in the heavens and as they may be found by searching in the soul itself. As the organ of opinion, on the other hand, reason has a share in physical life and is, like the things with which it deals, mortal. The problem of the reason thus falls back at last on the obscure paradox of the one and the many as seen in the "philosophy of the soul."

Two observations may be added to avoid misunderstanding. First, when such words as division and dichotomy are used it does not mean that one part of the soul can be cut from the other as we can sever the limbs of the body. Sec-

ondly, because opinion is concerned with what is only ephemerally stable (if the oxymoron may be allowed), it does not follow that such use of the reason is necessarily erroneous or negligible. On the contrary Plato distinguishes carefully between true opinion which corresponds with facts and false opinion which misjudges facts; and he makes it clear that our conduct in detail, under any given set of circumstances, must be guided by the formation of true opinion and by the right use of the practical reason.

30B Such is the nature of soul. As for its origin, we are told that, as all things reasonable are fairer than things without reason and as reason cannot be present without soul, therefore God set reason in soul, and soul in body, and so by his providence fashioned the world as best it might be. Now by the statement that reason cannot exist without soul Plato would seem to mean that reason is a part of soul, or, rather, that reason is a name for soul in its purity. He does not say, be it noted, that soul cannot exist without  
34C body, and he does say that soul is in reality prior (in dignity rather than in time) to body. Thus the world is made a living creature, with soul and reason, with a rational soul that is, which possesses consciousness and is sufficient to itself in its own love and knowledge.

To the question whether God himself is a soul



Plato in the *Timaeus* gives no direct answer, but there can be no doubt as to his intention. In the first place, emphatically, God is not identical with the world-soul; there is no trace anywhere in Plato's works of pantheism or a pantheistic immanence, nor any place for them in his philosophy. And further, God has no body; he is not a composite (*synamphoton*), a living creature such as the world is and as man is to be. But if the *Timaeus* thus separates God from the world and leaves him without a body, it does not deprive him of the attributes of soul; to have done so would have been to run counter to the main argument for the existence of God as we have read it in the *Laws*, not to mention other passages to the same import. The *Timaeus* does in fact represent him as morally affected (as good, without envy, etc.), as abiding in his own character, as going about his work with intelligence, and making calculations, as possessing reason—rather, as a soul in the form of pure reason, creating, governing, guiding. All these of course are mythological expressions, accommodations to our groping approach to a Being beyond our comprehension—"the maker and father is hard to find out and cannot be told to all men"—but I think that on the whole Plato took them rather simply, and in his language generally there is a notable absence of such vague transcendentalism as, when

examined, reduces God to an empty word. His dualism saved him from the metaphysical agony that sometimes troubles a monistic theology.<sup>13</sup>

27A

The lesser gods and the world-soul are the creation, or, in accordance with a distinction read by later theologians into the phrase “maker and father,” the offspring of the Demiurge. In the fashioning of the souls of men there is a double process. First, it is said, the Demiurge, taking what remained of the soul-stuff, no longer pure but mixed with runnings of the second and third order, flawed, that is, as the words seem to imply, by the potentiality of faculties of a lower nature, —taking and mingling this, the Demiurge now creates individual souls equal in number to the stars, wherein, riding for a season as in celestial chariots, they discern the laws of being and of destiny. With these first principles, or intuitions, planted in them, the souls are turned over to the lesser gods for further fashioning and guidance. From their hands is derived the mortal element of the soul, “having in itself dreadful and compelling passions—pleasure first, the greatest incitement to evil, then pains that frighten away

41D

69C

<sup>13</sup> Plutarch, *De Defectu Orac.* 10: Οἱ μὲν οὐδενὸς ἀπλῶς τὸν θεὸν οἱ δ' ὁμοῦ τι πάντων αἴτιον ποιῶντες ἀστοχοῦσι τοῦ μετρίου καὶ πρέποντος. εὖ μὲν οὖν λέγουσι καὶ οἱ λέγοντες, ὅτι Πλάτων τὸ ταῖς γεννωμέναις ποιότησιν ὑποκείμενον στοιχεῖον ἐξευρών, ὃ νῦν ὕλην καὶ φύσιν καλοῦσιν, πολλῶν ἀπήλλαξε καὶ μεγάλων ἀποριῶν τοὺς φιλοσόφους.

good, and besides these confidence and fear, witless counsellors both, and wrath hard to appease, and alluring hope. Having mingled these with irrational sensation and with love that stops at nothing, they composed as they could the mortal soul of man."

For a temporal habitation and vehicle of this composite soul the body is framed, and by a quaint contrivance, taken by Plato apparently with somewhat naïve simplicity, the faculties are kept separate by lodging reason in the head, the emotions in the thorax, and concupiscence in the abdomen. So men start on their mortal career and play their diverse parts, passing from birth to birth, and to higher and lower forms of existence according as they obey the laws implanted in them by the Demiurge or give way to the baser instincts of their nature. It is not that pleasure and pain, or the desires and emotions connected with them, are totally depraved in themselves—such an assumption would make nonsense of all the introductory books of the *Laws*—but they contain the principle of evil in so far as they are radically unlimited, belonging by nature to what in itself is without measure and tends by inertia to endless expansion. Hence, left to themselves, they run to evil, whereas under control they may become good, and the art of life lies in the governing of pleasure and

pain by a law exterior to them, in a man's becoming master of himself, or better than himself (*kreittôn heautou*).

What in this Platonic myth, one asks, is the precise relation of soul to body, especially as regards the origin of evil—a question of large practical consequences, to which unfortunately no unequivocal answer can be given. That in some way there is a kinship between the principle of evil in the soul and that principle of disorder in the primordial substance which is never entirely eliminated from the material world, so much is clear. Both belong to what is intrinsically limitless, to the flux, to the infinite as the Greeks understood that word: both are a part of the dark necessity of existence which cannot be argued away. By reason of this kinship, or similarity, it is easy to transfer the terms of one to the other; and from this transference it is but a step to a form of dualism which congregates all evil upon the body and regards psychic evil as a consequence merely of the soul's association with the flesh. Hence the crude pessimism and asceticism which arose at an early date in Hellenistic philosophy and were not always rigidly excluded from Christianity. Now undoubtedly in the *Timaeus* Plato does occasionally speak as if the body, with its inherent residue of rebellious disorder, were something more than kin to psychical

disorder, as, for example, in the passage where he says that the motions of the elements, falling upon the body like tempestuous winds, set up a disturbance which reaches to the soul and breaks the harmony of its pristine revolutions. And undoubtedly such a view of the relation of body and soul finds apparent support in certain of the earlier dialogues. But on the other hand there is the categorical statement of *The Republic*, never to be forgotten, that a man's soul contains within itself its own principles of good and evil, distinct from the good and evil of the body. And so, in the *Timaeus*, the individual soul as it comes from the hand of the Demiurge, and before any contact with the phenomenal world of time, bears the potential germ of evil, which becomes actual and active in those emotions and desires which are the soul's mortal part, and for which the body is fashioned. Maximus of Tyre would seem to be right in finding in Platonism two sources of evil, similar and confluent, but not identical, one in the soul itself, the other in the primordial activity of the substance out of which matter is evolved.<sup>14</sup>

43C  
44A

609B

It is tempting to carry this analogy a step further, and to attribute to the necessary cause a soul

<sup>14</sup> *Philosophoumena* xli, 4B: Τίς οὖν ἡ τῆς ἀτασθαλίας αἰτία ; οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς δυοῖν ἐστίαιν τὴν μὲν ἄμοιρον ἡγητέον κακῶν, τὴν δὲ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν ἐπιμεμιγμένην· ἢ τὰ μὲν ἀγαθὰ ἐπίρρυτα ἐκ τῆς ἐτέρας, τὰ δὲ κακὰ ἐξ αὐτοφυοῦς μοχθηρίας ἀνίσταται. διττὴ δὲ αὕτη, ἢ μὲν ὕλης πάθος, ἢ δὲ ψυχῆς ἐξουσία.

of evil balancing the soul of good in the divine cause. Such in fact was the theory of Plutarch,<sup>15</sup> who saw in the lifeless, inert "recipient" the primordial substance of matter, and to the active aspect of the cause (the disorderly moving Necessity, *ataktos anankê*) gave the properties of soul. And for this interpretation of the cosmic myth he found support in Plato's passing reference in the *Laws* to the evil-doing soul of the heavens and in the clear statement that all motion goes back to soul as the self-moved mover. The cosmic causes and their product would thus fall into a complete parallelism of soul and substance, which can be neatly schematized:

896D

<i>The divine cause</i>	<i>Creation</i>	<i>The necessary cause</i>
{ God, the soul of good	{ The soul of the world and its creatures	{ Necessity, the soul of evil
{ The Ideal pattern	{ Material phenomena	{ The primordial substance

The analogy is certainly seductive, and the authority of Plutarch, one of the greatest if not quite the greatest of all Platonists, ancient or modern, should not lightly be set aside; yet I am inclined to think that we are bound to waive both the analogy and the authority and to limit the extension of soul to God and the animate world. The isolated hint of the *Laws*, however it be interpreted, need not be carried into the mythology

<sup>15</sup> *De Animae Procreatione* §§6, 7.

of the *Timaeus*; and the ascription of self-motion to soul alone can be explained as meaning conscious and consecutive motion, or motion with a purpose (*telos*). On the other hand the account of the soul's creation can scarcely be forced into the Plutarchian scheme; and there is, I believe, not a word in the *Timaeus* which justifies a separation of the active and passive aspects of the necessary cause (this distinction of active and passive itself being in fact merely inferential) in a manner corresponding to the separation of God and Ideas in the divine cause. Though in its outer aspect the evil underlying the natural world is analogous to sin in the soul, each being a principle of disorder and inert expansiveness, yet in another sense the two are diverse, even contrary, in their working. The effect of natural evil is to break down the organized world into a kind of chaotic sea of indifference; it is the enemy of distinction and segregation. Psychological evil on the other hand has just the opposite tendency. As Plato shows in the argument for immortality in the tenth book of *The Republic*, its source is not general but particular, and its effect is rather to sharpen the personal isolation of the soul and to intensify the principle of individualization.

The attempt to force the myth of the *Timaeus* into the Procrustean bed of logic has thus given rise to two incompatible theories: one which

would find a complete parallelism of soul and body, each with its own principle of good and evil; another which would result in a sharp hostility of soul and body, by making soul the source of good and body the source of evil. The former theory was adopted by Plutarch, the latter went over into various schools of pessimism and asceticism. Of the two the parallelism of Plutarch is certainly closer to the general trend of Plato's thought than the other. It harmonizes more readily with the thoroughly Grecian element in Plato's views of education, and more particularly with such passages of the *Timaeus* itself as that which sets the law of healthy living in a due balance and adjustment of the activities of body and soul; Plato never learnt asceticism from his master Socrates, nor did he ever develop it for himself. Yet, if nearer to the truth, the Plutarchian theory is not quite the truth. It does not sufficiently recognize the soul as *paidagôgos*, or disciplinarian leader in the partnership (though in his practical ethics Plutarch was clear enough on this point); nor does it quite adequately keep hold of the fact that the body, with its roots in the dark chaos of necessity, is the instrument, if not ultimately the cause, of psychical evil, and that the way of salvation is strangely connected with a release from the body's imperative needs and impulses.

87D

89D



So the matter stands. I fear we must simply admit that no perfectly consistent theory of body and soul in their relation to evil can be drawn from Plato's works. It is fair and safe to add that no other teacher of philosophy or religion has ever succeeded in solving this importunate problem without doing violence in one direction or another to the apparent facts of our moral experience. For a right understanding of the *Timaeus* the essential point after all is this, that Plato's myth is true to the dualism of his philosophy, and, starting with evil as a given necessity, virtually admits the incomprehensibility of its origin.

## CHAPTER IX

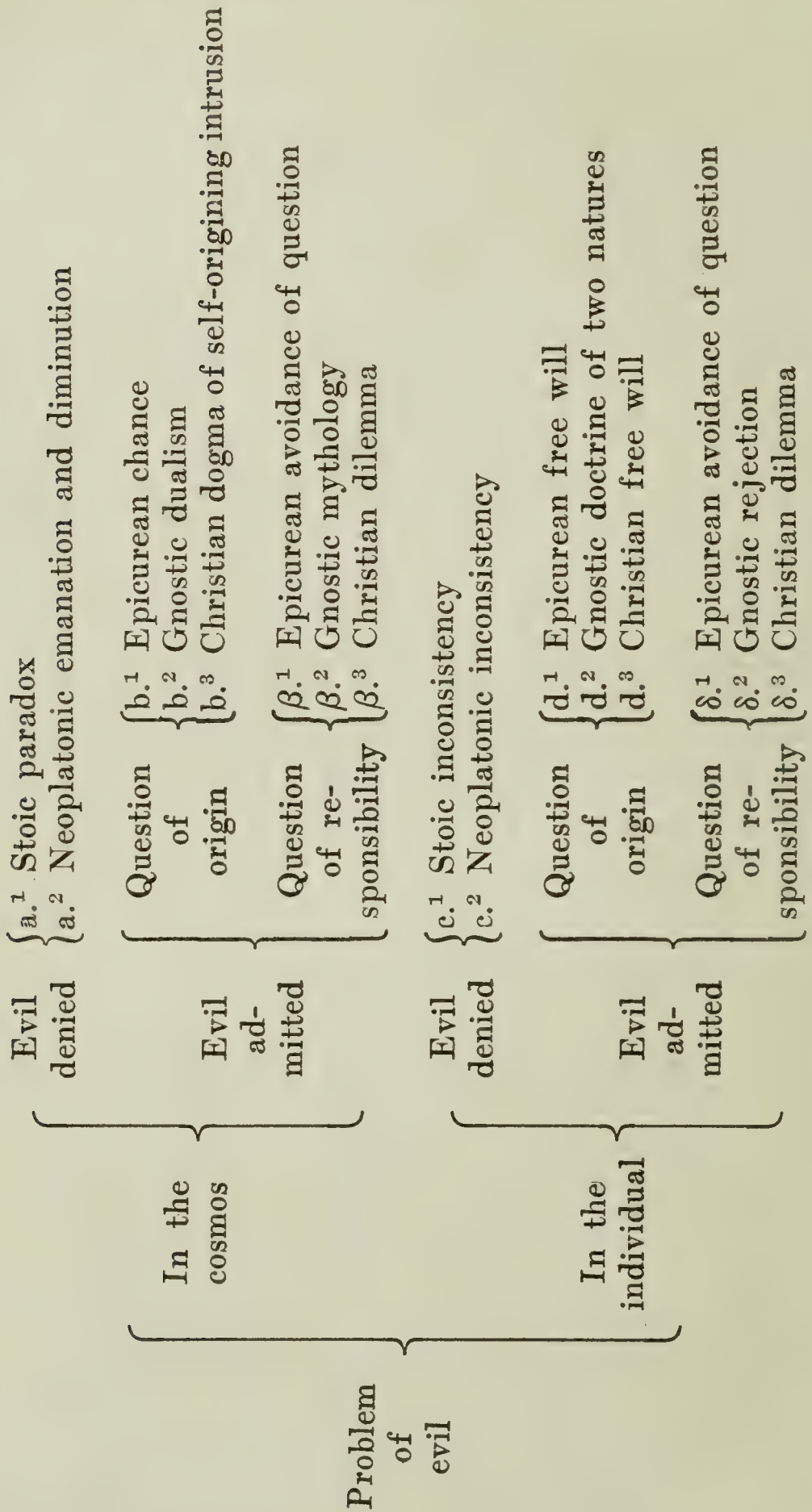
### MYTHOLOGY: THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The *Timaeus* may be regarded as an elaborate myth in which the imagination is allowed to deal in its own way with certain obscure facts of human experience. It displays the rôle of evil in this world of ours, starting with the passions of the soul, in themselves unregulated and endlessly expansive, and with a similar power of unrest in the background of nature. How, one asks, does this mythical drama agree with Plato's constant ethical doctrine that evil is somehow identical with ignorance and that no man sins, or errs, willingly?

Before attempting a solution of this problem it may be well to note the position of the various schools that attacked the question of evil in Hellenistic times, and that are to be treated more fully in later volumes of this series. For in truth we come here to a matter which is at once the source and consternation of most human thinking. "The real riddle of existence," as Mansel says, "the problem which confounds all philosophy,—aye, and all religion, too, so far as religion is a thing of man's reason,—is the fact that evil exists

*at all.*"<sup>1</sup> Mansel is right, I think, in attributing the rout of philosophy—though I should have preferred to say metaphysics, drawing here the line between the legitimate and the illegitimate use of the reason—and of rationalizing theology to the endeavour to explain rationally what cannot be so explained; but I am right also, I trust, in holding that the virtue of Platonism, when it is true to itself, is in its rejection of metaphysics at just this point. This difference of method between Platonism and the various Hellenistic schools can be seen by a glance at the following diagram, with the notes appended. The problem of evil has two aspects, as it is related to the cosmos and to the individual. Under each of these relations the various schools of thought would naturally fall into two groups: those which categorically deny the existence of evil, and those which, theoretically at least, admit its reality. Among those which admit the reality of evil two questions would then arise: the question of origin, or how evil comes to be, and the question of responsibility.

<sup>1</sup> *Bampton Lectures* 145.



## NOTES ON DIAGRAM

(a<sup>1</sup>) By the Stoic paradox is meant the theory which regards the imperfections of the parts of a system as necessary for the perfection of the whole as a closed and unitary system. Such a use of the word "necessary" is the very opposite of Plato's, implying as it does not that evil is necessarily, *i.e.* inexplicably, in the world, but that as a necessary factor of good it is essentially not evil. Chrysippus summarizes the Stoic theory in a few sentences quoted by Aulus Gellius: "Nothing is more utterly blind and stupid than those who think that goods could exist if there were not also evils in the world. For as goods are the contrary of evils, it is necessary that both should exist together, each supporting the other by a kind of mutual resistance."<sup>2</sup> To which may be added Plutarch's comment on a still bolder statement of the same paradox: "It is neither possible,' says Chrysippus, 'nor expedient altogether to remove evil.' This is not the place to consider whether it is inexpedient to remove lawlessness and injustice and folly; but you yourself, Chrysippus, are at strife with reason and God, in so far as by your philosophizing you are doing what you can to annihilate evil which it is inexpedient to annihilate."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Noctes Ambros.* VI, i. An illegitimate expansion of *Theaetetus* 176A. Plato says, ὑπεναντίον γάρ τι τῷ ἀγαθῷ ἀεὶ εἶναι ἀνάγκη, but he would have recoiled from the deduction, *mutuo adverso quaeque fulta nisu.*

<sup>3</sup> *De Stoicorum Repugn.* §36.—Professor Santayana, in his *Character and Opinion in the United States* pp. 105 ff, has a masterly analysis and refutation of Royce's attempt to revive the old Stoic paradox.

(a<sup>2</sup>) Neoplatonism undertakes to account for evil negatively by means of successive emanations, or expansions, from a metaphysical Unity of an extreme type. Theoretically, evil, as mere distance from, or diminution of, Being, *per se* does not exist, is not-being. But with this abstract theory is jumbled, rather clumsily, the Stoic paradox.

(b<sup>1</sup>β<sup>1</sup>) Epicureanism admits the existence of physical evil, but by carrying everything back to blind chance as the one ultimate cause really eliminates the moral distinction between evil and good. There can be no question of responsibility in such a doctrine.

(b<sup>2</sup>β<sup>2</sup>) Gnostics and Manicheans in general account for evil by separating the Demiurge, or Creator, himself more or less evil, from the supreme God of goodness. Their theories are involved in a grotesque mythology which sounds often like a travesty of Platonism. The Demiurge is responsible, God is not.

(b<sup>3</sup>β<sup>3</sup>) Christians start with the monistic assumption of an absolute, omnipotent Deity who creates the world by *fiat* out of nothing. The obvious dilemma which confronts such a theory is thus put by Lactantius into the mouth of an Epicurean atheist: "God, he says, either wills to abolish evils and is not able, or is able and does not will; or He neither wills nor is able; or He both wills and is able. If He wills and is not able, He is feeble; which cannot be said of God. If He is able and does not will, He is malicious; which also is foreign to God. If He neither wills nor is able, He is both malicious and feeble; and so is not God. If He wills and is able, whence then are evils, or why does He

not abolish them?" To escape this dilemma and to relieve God of responsibility, evil is held to be a self-originating intrusion into what was created good. On this ground two main lines of apology are followed. One is akin to the Stoic paradox, as stated thus by Lactantius: "And for this reason He does not abolish evils because, as I have explained, He has bestowed wisdom also at the same time, and there is more of good and happiness in wisdom than of suffering in evils. Moreover wisdom makes us to know God and through that knowledge to attain immortality; which is the highest good. Therefore unless we first acquired the knowledge of evil, we could not have acquired the knowledge of good."<sup>4</sup> The other line of apology is content to rest in a distinction between what God positively wills and what He merely permits as extraneous to His purpose. Thus Clement of Alexandria: "But it is true that nothing happens without the will of the Lord of all. It remains to say summarily that such things [evils] happen without the prevention of God, for such a belief alone saves both the Providence and the goodness of God."<sup>5</sup>

(c<sup>1</sup>) In respect to evil in the soul the Stoics are radically inconsistent. Their fatalistic monism leaves no choice in the human will, yet in some way men do choose between a state of mind in harmony with the sum of things and a spirit of individual rebellion or reluctance which has for them all the consequences of evil.

<sup>4</sup> *De Ira* 13.—Compare with this Thomas Aquinas, *Summa* I, xlvii, 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Stromata* IV, xii, 86.

(c<sup>2</sup>) Here the Neoplatonists also are inconsistent. There is no positive evil, yet their ethic is based on a system of asceticism and of flight from a world the very touch of which is contamination to the soul.

(d<sup>1</sup>δ<sup>1</sup>) Epicurus seems to derive the notion of free will from a fortuitous deflection in the motion of the atoms. But the transition from impersonal chance to personal choice is not easily conceivable. There is no real sense of moral evil in his ethics any more than in his physics, although he has much to say about the method of escape from pain and fear.

(d<sup>2</sup>δ<sup>2</sup>) Gnostics and Manicheans involve the fate of man in their cosmic theology. In conformity with their conception of a good God and a more or less evil god they commonly divide mankind into a class whose nature is essentially good and a class whose nature is essentially evil. Such a dissociation of the "two natures" removes the question of responsibility from ethics.

(d<sup>3</sup>δ<sup>3</sup>) Christians place the origin of evil primarily in the will of man or of some angelic being, and regard cosmic evil as secondary to this. Sin and evil come into the world by Adam, or through Adam by Satan, who both were created free and deliberately chose evil. The dilemma as stated above (b<sup>3</sup>β<sup>3</sup>) thus falls here *a fortiori*. It is hard to find a plausible reply to the question why a spirit, created without inclination to evil, should with full knowledge of the consequences choose evil. I omit, as abhorrent to reason and conscience, the Calvinistic admission that God for His good pleasure willed the evil choice made by man.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> I am dealing here with the monism of Christian theology.



Now, running the eye again over this scheme, we see that, apart from the Gnostics and the Manicheans who may be left out of the account for the present, all these non-Platonic systems are monistic, and that their monism leads to one of two consequences: either they frankly deny the existence of evil, or they admit its existence but then straightway are compelled so to connect it with the supreme cause as virtually to explain it away. In either case the result, logically if not practically, is that evil becomes merely relative and ceases to be regarded as a positive reality in the world and in the soul of man. And I would ask my reader not to dismiss these logical difficulties as "academic," a matter of words only; they are far from that. Perhaps the most insidious ally of sin and suffering in the world has been that theory of conduct which is expressed in such popular maxims as these: The end justifies the means, Do evil that good may arise, Let him sow his wild oats, Knowledge of goodness comes through experience of evil, The worst sinner is the best preacher. Wars and persecutions, hideous wide-sweeping devastations, have had their root in just these beliefs; and not public calamities only, but the corruptions of art, the

There is another whole aspect of Christian philosophy, presented by the Incarnation, which we shall have occasion to consider elsewhere.

tragedies of private life, the daily infractions of happiness, have their palliation if not their source in the same paltering with the simple truth that, so far as we can know or guess, evil is eternally evil and good eternally good. It all goes back to, and finds confirmation in, a Jesuitical lie which explains away evil for the greater glory of God. A philosophy that makes the imperfection of the part necessary for the perfection of the whole, or a theology that defends the permission of evil in the world as an instrument of greater good through salvation, cannot be severed from the public adoption of vicious means for the advancement of religion or State, or from the private indulgence in wickedness or loose conduct as a foundation of character and success. Philosophy is the whole of life. The condemnation of such perversions does not mean, of course, that good cannot be wrung out of evil, or that we may not learn wisdom from our mistakes; but it does mean emphatically that the better way and the higher wisdom and the greater strength and the purer virtue lie in the avoidance, so far as that is humanly possible, of evil and error from the beginning:

“Happier, had it sufficed him to have known  
Good by itself, and Evil not at all.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Paradise Lost* xi, 88.

All monistic theorizing on the ultimate origin of evil turns inevitably to an apology for evil; although it is fair to add that the wiser doctors of Christianity have permitted their deep abhorrence of sin to thrust itself athwart their metaphysics before the last fatal step was taken. A few of them have perceived the religious conjunction of scepticism (*i.e.* the admission of our ignorance of ultimate causes) and spiritual affirmation (*i.e.* our immediate knowledge of the radical distinction between good and evil) as clearly as ever Socrates did, and thus have maintained what may be called a secret dualism as Plato maintained it openly. One preacher of recent years has given noble expression to this truth in words that are at once Platonic in conception and Christian in intensity of feeling: "His [Martineau's] general conclusion is that moral evil is not the *instrument*, but the *enemy* of God; and if we still ask, 'Whence this foe?' no answer can be given. 'All the ingenuities of logic and of language leave it a mystery still: and it is better to stand within the darkness in the quietude of faith, than vainly to search for its margin in the restlessness of knowledge.'"<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Life of James Martineau*, by J. Drummond, I, 103.—Prof. Dickinson S. Miller has an excellent article in the first issue of the *American Theological Review*, on the practical danger of seeking solutions for the problem of evil. But I cannot avoid the suspicion that this very danger is proved by some of the conclusions of his article in the following issue of the magazine.

Now what Christianity obtained by a certain inconsistency is the consistent basis of Plato's philosophy. His dualism is virtually tantamount to a refusal to deal with the origin of evil metaphysically, recognizing the question as rationally insoluble and not making for edification. His mythology leaves evil in the cosmos as a mysterious unaccountable fact, for which no person (that is, no conscious will like our own) is responsible. It leaves room for a personal creating God, who is good but not omnipotent in the Christian or metaphysical sense. So in his treatment of psychical evil Plato avoids the abyss of monism by distinguishing between the immortal and the mortal elements of the soul, and by the myth of transmigration, which regards the state of any individual soul now as dependent upon its conduct in a past life, and that state on a still previous existence. But along with this metaphysical continence it is a fact that the Dialogues dwell largely on the psychological aspects of the problem—his whole philosophy is predominantly ethical—and our present task is to see how the metaphysical continence of his mythology can be harmonized with his psychological study of causes.

Socrates, it is well known, identified virtue with knowledge, and Plato took over this dogma as the corner stone of his ethical psychology. An-

other favourite belief of Socrates, apparently, was that no man sinned, or erred, willingly; and this dogma also was accepted by his pupil without question. Hence we have as our starting point these two theses, the identification of evil with ignorance and the involuntariness of evil, which are succinctly joined together in a statement of the *Sophist*: “We know that no soul is voluntarily ignorant of anything.” Now what exactly does Plato mean by this involuntary ignorance that lies behind all evil-doing?

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In the discussion in the *Laws* of the Socratic sentence that “all evil men in all things are evil unwillingly,” Plato considers two aspects of willingness: first, the intention to do an injury, and secondly, the intention to act unjustly; and then makes a like division of injustice (here, as commonly, a general term for evil-doing) into, first, an intentional act of injury, and, secondly, a voluntary state of injustice in the mind of the doer. And in each of these divisions he admits the existence of the first and denies the existence of the second. That is to say, he admits, naturally, that men do intentionally injure others and that such injuries may be unjust in fact, but he refuses to admit that, in so acting, men have the will to be unjust, or that their acts are voluntarily, from their own point of view, unjust.<sup>9</sup> He

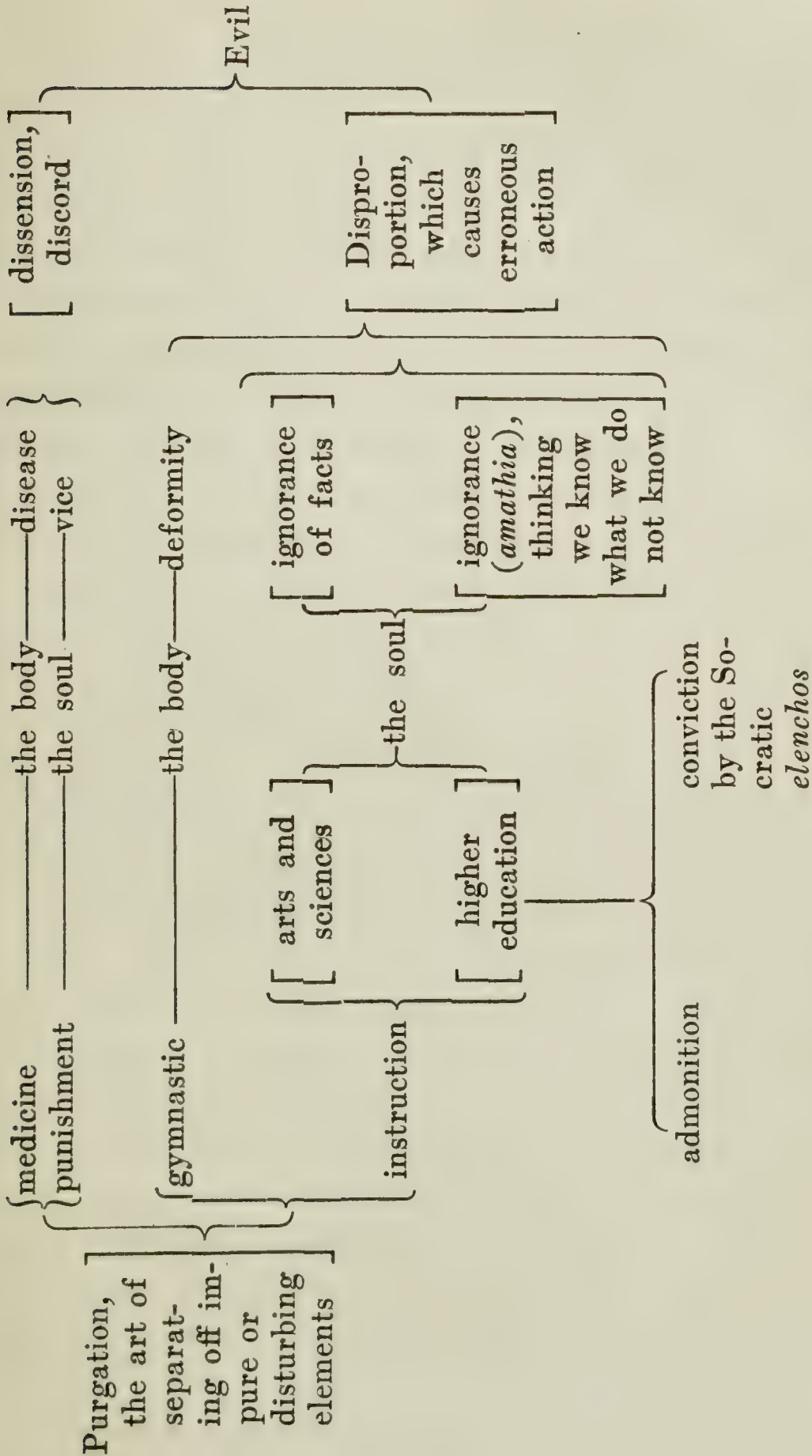
860D ff.

<sup>9</sup> The same position is held in *Euthyphro* 8c.

then proceeds to analyse the motives of these acts of injury, which may be unjust in fact, under three heads: (1) anger or fear, as a vice of the emotional faculty, or the *thymoeides*; (2) the desire of pleasure, as a vice of concupiscence, or the *epithymêtikon*; (3) ignorance, as a vice of the reason. The last motive he subdivides into a simple ignorance (more properly *agnoia*) of the facts of the case, and a double, or deeper, ignorance (more properly *amathia*) in the very soul of the man, being of the nature of that first falsehood (*prôton pseudos*) which Plato often describes as a state of not knowing what one knows and what one does not know.

226c ff. The same triple division is carried through the elaborate metaphor, in the *Sophist*, of the purification of evil, the ramifications of which can best be presented by a diagram (p. 245).

The purpose of this comparison is to show how evil in the soul is to be cured by a sort of purification (as one branch of the more general art of separation or dividing-out) similar to that employed in healing corruption in the body. For the body there are two arts: medicine, which purges away disease as a surfeit causing a discord among the humours of the body, and gymnastic, which removes a native deformity, or disproportion, of the body itself. Correspondingly, for remedying vice in the soul, we employ punish-



ment as a medicine to drive out a temporary discord of the faculties, and instruction as a gymnastic to remove that inner deformity for which another name is ignorance. Further, a study of the text will show that under the sort of psychical disease that is to be cured by punishment Plato included the first two forms of injustice described in the *Laws* as proceeding from anger or fear and from the desire of pleasure, when these swell beyond the control of reason and create a state of discord or faction in the soul. And, again, as in the *Laws*, the evil of ignorance is subdivided into two classes: (1) the simple ignorance (*agnoia*) which may be dispelled by instruction in the practical arts and in the relations of life, and (2) the deeper ignorance (*amathia*) which springs from thinking we know what we do not know, and which is cured by the higher instruction in the form either of admonition or of the peculiar art of conviction by dialectic (the *elenchos*) employed by Socrates.

Now from these typical passages of the *Laws* and the *Sophist* one's first conclusion might be that Plato set apart surrender to the passions of anger and fear and pleasure as belonging to a different category altogether from ignorance and error of judgment. But that would be to misread his real meaning. In other dialogues such a distinction, instead of being maintained, is care-



fully refined away. So, in the earlier Socratic pieces, bravery and temperance and friendliness appear somehow to be associated with knowledge and their contraries with ignorance. So, more specifically, it is said in the *Protagoras* that inferiority to one's self, or self-surrender (that is the dominance of the passions), is nothing but ignorance. And again, in the *Laws*, there is the statement that the worst form of ignorance is when a man does not love, but hates, that which seems to him beautiful and good, while he loves and welcomes that which seems evil and unjust. The whole tenor of Plato's philosophy leads to the conclusion that all evil in the soul, however various its manifestations may be, is somehow the contrary of knowledge.

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Hence, to return to the diagram of the *Sophist*, it will be in conformity with Plato's general method to take the analysis of evil as proceeding by way of subsumption rather than by way of exclusion. That is to say the ignorance (*amathia*) which is the ultimate form of evil will not be without contact with the other forms of evil, but will be different in order, or precedence; it is at once a specific kind of vice and the source of all vice, just as vice itself is one, though it has manifold appearances. As seated deep in the reasoning faculty this ignorance is an evil to be cured by the Socratic *elenchos*, which, by throwing into re-

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lief the self-contradictions of the presumptuously wise, brings them to a state of wholesome humility and renders them amenable to correction. "For, as physicians hold that the body can have no enjoyment from proffered nourishment before the internal hindrances are expelled, so the philosophic purgers of the soul believe that it can derive no benefit from proffered instruction before it is brought to a kind of shame by the *elenchos* of conviction, and thus, the opinions hostile to instruction being driven out, it is made pure and thinks it knows only those things which it really knows." In other words, the purging of presumptuous ignorance must precede the instruction in the arts of life, and is the *sine qua non* of such instruction; and in like manner such a purgation must prepare the way for the medicinal chastisement of the soul sick with the passions of anger and fear, pleasure and desire. Punishment, in fact, is always taken by Plato as a corrective rather than as a vindictive measure, and the penalties imposed on the soul which is, as it were, a victim of its own baser parts, are merely a special and drastic form of the Socratic *elenchos*, brought to bear on the faction and self-contradiction of moral disease and so arousing the soul to efforts of self-mastery and unison. Until that inner conviction takes place the soul, under the sway of voluntary falsehood, "is content to

wallow like a swinish beast in the mire of ignorance, and has no shame at being detected.”<sup>10</sup>

Knowledge and virtue are identical, but the ignorance which is the fountain-head of evil is not a mere lack of calculation in which the brain alone is concerned. Certainly Plato did not so regard it. Rather it is something which affects the whole soul and all the soul's faculties—a something positive that can be purged away, as the peccant humours of the body are purged, so as to leave the soul in its purity, a true soul “in its philosophy,” cleansed of the base accretions it has taken into itself and akin to the divine and immortal and that which always *is*.

More precisely the nature of this parent of the vices can be gathered by bringing together three

<sup>10</sup> *Republic* 535E: Τὸ δ' ἀκούσιον (ψεύδος) εὐκόλως προσδέχεται καὶ ἀμαθαίνουσά που ἀλισκομένη μὴ ἀγανακτῆ, ἀλλ' εὐχερῶς ὡσπερ θηρίον ὕειον ἐν ἀμαθίᾳ μολύνηται.—This Platonic meaning of ἀμαθία, as a stubborn unteachableness rather than passive ignorance, is quite in accord with the normal use of the word in literature. So, for instance, it will be found employed in the tragedies of Euripides to denote a wilful perversion of the mind for which the man is responsible (*e.g.* *Bacchae* 490, *Madness of Hercules* 172, *Phoenician Maidens* 763). And, passing down the centuries, one can see in Athanasius how this falls in with the constant tendency among the Greeks to assimilate the will and the understanding: Ἔδει δὲ αὐτοὺς, λέγοντας “βουλήσει” τὸν υἱόν, εἰπεῖν ὅτι καὶ “φρονήσει” γέγονε· ταῦτόν γὰρ ἡγοῦμαι φρόνησιν καὶ βούλησιν εἶναι· ὃ γὰρ βουλεύεται τις, τοῦτο πάντως καὶ φρονεῖ· καὶ ὃ φρονεῖ, τοῦτο καὶ βουλεύεται (*Contra Ar.* iii, 65).

117D or four scattered passages. In the *First Alcibiades* it is said: "You understand, then, that our sins of practice are owing to this ignorance, that we think we know when we do not know"; and

731D in the *Laws* this presumption of knowledge is further described thus: "The greatest evil to men, generally, is one which is innate in their souls, and which a man is always excusing in himself and so has no way of escaping. I mean what is expressed in the saying that every man is and ought to be dear to himself. . . . From this same fault arises the common habit of regarding our own ignorance (*amathia*) as wisdom, and of thinking we know all things when, so to speak, we really know nothing." By this deceit the very desire of enlightenment is killed and philosophy

Symposium 204A is cut off at the root: "for herein is the calamity of ignorance (*amathia*), that he who is neither good nor wise is nevertheless content with himself; for feeling no want, he has no desire of that of which he has no conscious need." And by the same conceit he is deprived of religious support in the hour of temptation; for the baser crimes are

Laws 880E committed by those "who fear not the wrath of the gods or the storied vengeance of the nether world, but, as knowing what they by no means know, despise the ancient and universal belief of mankind." This ignorance is clearly, then, a self-ignorance and is nourished by self-love. It

is the opposite of that scepticism, or humility of the intellect, which Socrates held to be a twin growth with spiritual insight; it is the enemy of that command to "know thyself" which the god of Delphi announced as the beginning of religion. In the terms of Plato's philosophy it might be defined as an inherent reluctance of the soul to face honestly the dualism of man's nature, and, under the spur of a noble discontent, to acknowledge its own darker member and turn from that to what is akin in itself to the gods.

The great enemy leagued against the soul, fostering its self-love by treacherous wiles, breeding the illusion that it knows what it does not know, disparaging the *elenchos* that would purge away the deadening humours of self-complaisance, is flattery. And this foe is not simple, but manifold, insidious, beguiling, threatening. It smiles in every gift of pleasure that bids us barter the future for the present; it frowns in every approach of pain; in the guise of honour and reputation it intrigues with every emotion of pride or resentment or the like that seems to magnify our personal importance. It assumes the garb of philosophy in a thousand maxims, preaching sermons of self-righteousness on such texts as these: that men are naturally virtuous and need only release from constraint to fulfill their nobler destiny, that of our own impulse we are unselfish

but have been warped by society, that not we but some one else is responsible for the evil we do, that education must be directed to develop our native bent and temperament, that self-respect is not compatible with reverence for authority, that fear is unmanly, that progress is by way of letting each man do as he pleases. The air of Athens was full of these flattering voices,<sup>11</sup> which Plato called the utter dishonour of the soul, and which have not ceased to reverberate in the world. They had seized the stronghold of art and letters, and from it they have never been entirely ejected.

463A ff. When Plato, in the *Gorgias*, represents Socrates as defending his own practice against the more popular teachers of the day, he makes the use of flattery the point of distinction. As in the treatment of the body, he says, there is a true science of gymnastic and physic, of which the so-called arts of adornment and fine cooking are servile imitations, so in matters of the soul there is a true art of law and judgment in opposition to which the professors of literature have set up

<sup>11</sup> Athenaeus, who, if any one, ought to have understood the nature of flattery, has a striking passage (vi, 65) on the progress of the disease in Athens: *Τοιοῦτοι τότε ἐγένοντο οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι κολακείας θηρίου χαλεπωτάτου λύσσαν ἐμβαλούσης αὐτῶν τῇ πόλει . . . . περὶ ἧς καλῶς ὁ Διογένης ἔλεγε πολὺ κρεῖττον εἶναι ἐς κόρακας ἀπελθεῖν ἢ ἐς κόλακας.* Athenaeus was thinking mainly of flattery in a gross form, but he quotes Plato also, in a way to show that he had some notion of the philosophical import of the word.

their clever tricks of sophistic and rhetoric. And these pseudo-arts can be known by a definite trait, their appeal always is through flattery, open or disguised. So deep-rooted was this corruption that Plato, the master poet of words by nature and practice, did not quail from expelling poetry almost utterly from his city of philosophers.<sup>12</sup>

Those are the enemies from the world, who clamber about the citadel of the soul. But there is a still worse enemy within—that *rhathymia*, “indolence” or “effeminate slackness,” of the soul itself; “the master vice of all our business,” as Burke calls it, “degenerate and inglorious sloth.” The word *rhathymia* is not frequent in Plato’s Dialogues, but the idea is emphatically there, and its force may best be understood by glancing first at the ethical psychology of a late Christian orator, St. Chrysostom, who in many respects was a faithful interpreter of the Platonic tradition.

For the natural history of evil, as Chrysostom understood it, we need go no further than his three great sermons, the fourteenth (Field) on Romans and the second and fifth on Ephesians.

<sup>12</sup> Plato’s serious and final objection to poetry and the arts, as shown in the tenth book of *The Republic*, is owing to their tendency to flatter the emotional side of the soul and so to make rational self-control more difficult. Plutarch has an interesting passage, too long to quote, at the beginning of his *Quomodo Adulator*, on the Platonic connexion of ignorance, self-love (*φιλαυτία*), and flattery.

According to the view here followed, as in all orthodox writing, the world is in the completest sense a creation of God, and as such is originally altogether good. Spirit and soul, as they spring into existence at the word of the Creator, are instinct with virtue and incline to that love and sympathy which are the fulfilment of the law. Neither is evil inherent in the flesh or in what we call nature. The desires associated with the body are intrinsically without blame, and the good life is that which is in accord with nature, whereas the evil life is contrary to nature. So much must be held by any theist who takes an all-wise and all-powerful Deity as the starting point of his speculation. But Chrysostom, as an orthodox Christian, is equally convinced of the heinous reality of sin and of man's responsibility therefor; and to explain this perversion of human nature he has recourse to two expedients, which he mingles together without being aware of their mutual incompatibility. By one of these man is created with a free power of choice and deliberately chooses evil as his portion. The operation of this choice is through the imagination, which corrupts the naturally healthy desires of the flesh. Thus, to take the illustration familiar to Chrysostom, the sexual impulse is implanted in the body by God for worthy ends, but by the imagination the



soul corrupts this natural desire to a lust for unnatural and illicit satisfactions.

But along with this theory of deliberate choice Chrysostom had another explanation of evil based on the notion of subordination (*hypotagê*). The flesh, with its desires, he still asserts, is as created intrinsically good, but it is of an inferior order to the soul, and retains its goodness only so long as this subordination endures. Evil, then, would be a kind of rebellion, by which the inferior partner of the corporation, so to speak, assumes authority and shakes off the regulating control of its natural ruler. But the responsibility for this inversion of order lies, again, not upon the flesh, which is endowed only with impulse and is without the principle of restraint, but upon the soul, which by its indolence suffers its delegated power of restraint to sink away.<sup>13</sup> Hence arise the excess of desire and the tendency to limitless expansion of which is wrought all our misery. Why the body should contain this innate tendency to excess, which is the matter if not the cause of evil, Chrysostom does not explain, nor could he easily explain it while remaining true to his theory of creation. Attributing evil to the soul, however, he can speak of it, not as a matter of deliberate choice, but as the result of a de-

<sup>13</sup> *In Galat.* 720B: Τοῦτο δὲ οὐ σώματος κατηγορία, ἀλλὰ ῥαθύμου ψυχῆς ἔγκλημα.

ficiency of energy (*rhathymia*), a failure of attention.<sup>14</sup>

This is the theory of evil, as a failure of the negative will, or will to refrain, rather than a vice of the positive will, which Chrysostom stresses; it is in accordance with such a view that he sees our peril less in the violent temptations, whose very magnitude, striking an innocent soul, would frighten it from a course of sin, than in those little relaxations which individually seem of no importance, but gradually form a habit of indifference and in the end leave the soul without power of resistance.<sup>15</sup> By this indolence the law of God is made of no avail.<sup>16</sup>

Now eliminate from Chrysostom's ethical theory the metaphysical ideas of God and creation, and you will have remaining the doctrine of pure Platonism. It is this *rhathymia* that leads

<sup>14</sup> Ἀπροσεξία, *In Ephes.* 37c, et passim.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., *In Mat.* 815A, and *In Rom.* 554CE.

<sup>16</sup> *In Rom.* 557D: Πόθεν οὖν ἡ ἁμαρτία γέγονεν, εἰ οὕτω θαυμαστός ὁ διδάσκαλος (i.e. ὁ νόμος); παρὰ τὴν τῶν μαθητῶν ῥαθυμίαν. What follows bears on the relation between *rhathymia* and ignorance. The interest of Chrysostom is almost purely psychological; he was the Christian preacher *par excellence*. But in some of the earlier theologians, beginning with Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* VII, vii, 46: οἶδεν γὰρ καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων τινὰς ὑπὸ ῥαθυμίας ὀλισθήσαντας . . .), and continuing through Origen and Athanasius, the notion of *rhathymia* is carried back into the cosmic drama of the Fall. The further exposition of the subject must be reserved for a later volume.

men to rest lazily in a materialistic philosophy, explaining their actions by those mechanical causes which are first visible to the eye, and forgoing the search after the ethical motives which are the true springs of our life. It is against the innate indolence of the will that the whole scheme of Platonic education is directed. In *The Republic* a severe training in resistance and endurance is prescribed for the rulers to the end that they may be rendered impervious to the flattery and juggling deceits of pleasure; and the final test of the guardian of the State is his ability to guard within his soul the deposit of the truth against all the seductions of time. So the downward course of the soul and the State, in what may be called the Tyrant's Progress of the eighth and ninth books, follows a successive yielding to the indulgence of temperament. The elaborate discipline of the *Laws* in the choice of pleasures and pains looks to a strengthening of that part of the soul which imposes a due check on the out-reaching desires. Everywhere in the Dialogues the life of philosophy is represented as a deathless battle within the fortress of the soul, a constant warfare, in which vigilance is the price of liberty. Few are the victors, but the reward is fair and great the hope.<sup>17</sup>

Phaedo 99B

413c ff.

Phaedo 114c

<sup>17</sup> The connexion of this theory of *rhathymia* with Aristotle's doctrine of *ἐνέργεια*, and with the Stoic conception of *ἀσθένεια*

So, I think, we can understand what Plato meant by identifying vice with a kind of ignorance that must be purged away. Many of the mishaps of life, the wrongs that so easily might have been avoided, he would attribute to ignorance in the simplest sense of the word,—the ignorance of circumstances, of means, of persons, the fumbling of inexperience, the stupidity of the well-intentioned:

“Our faults no tenderness should ask,  
 The chastening stripes must cleanse them all;  
 But for our blunders—oh, in shame  
 Before the eyes of heaven we fall.

“Earth bears no balsam for mistakes;  
 Men crown the knave, and scourge the tool  
 That did his will; but Thou, O Lord,  
 Be merciful to me, a fool!”<sup>18</sup>

But behind these more or less venial errors lies the dark reach of an ignorance like a mist in the soul spreading from its self-love and indolence, as from a noisome stagnant pool, a mist wherein the pleasures near at hand loom up in exaggerated magnitude, while the remoter consequences are

or *ἄτομία* as the cause of *πάθη*, need only be mentioned. An interesting parallel also might be drawn with the *pamâda* of Buddhism and the *accidia* of medieval theology.

<sup>18</sup> From *The Fool's Prayer* of Edward Rowland Sill.

not seen at all or are beheld vaguely as unreal phantoms.<sup>19</sup> Hence that illusion of the near and the far, the *skiagraphia* of a misleading perspective, as Plato was fond of describing it, which distorts the facts of life and renders us a prey to the flattery of the present and to immediate solicitations. And in that cloud the soul is benumbed <sup>Politicus 273c</sup> by a kind of lethean torpor into forgetfulness of itself and of its dower of happiness, of its God and of the eternal laws implanted in it originally as a memory to be clung to strenuously through all the vicissitudes of birth and rebirth. And so, by this initial lack of attention, we fall into that *prôton pseudos*, the first lie, of the soul that knows not what it knows and does not know. For this perversion of ignorance the soul is responsible, since the cause is entirely within itself. Yet in a way, too, the evil may be said to be involuntary, since it is not a willing choice of the soul, but, as it were, a failure to choose at all, a mere sluggish drifting with the tides of temperament.

So far Plato carries the analysis of evil, to the ignorance that is involved in self-love and *rhathymia* beginning somewhere in the far backward

<sup>19</sup> *Laws* 875B: Ἡ θνητὴ φύσις, . . . φεύγουσα μὲν ἀλόγως τὴν λύπην, διώκουσα δὲ τὴν ἡδονήν, τοῦ δὲ δικαιοτέρου τε καὶ ἀμείνονος ἐπίπροσθεν ἄμφω τούτῳ προστήσεται, καὶ σκότος ἀπεργαζομένη ἐν αὐτῇ πάντων κακῶν ἐμπλήσει πρὸς τὸ τέλος αὐτὴν τε καὶ τὴν πόλιν ὅλην.

and abysm of time; but if you inquire into the further cause of this failure of the inhibiting will, there is no answer given in the Dialogues, nor do I think you will find satisfaction elsewhere. Plato has traced the stream to the last discoverable source in the consciousness of the soul itself, and to seek to go beyond that is to pass into the emptiness of metaphysics. As we have seen, it is tempting to explain the defection of the will and the ignorance of self-love as belonging to the dark Necessity of the phenomenal work of creation, and such an explanation is sound to this extent, that moral evil also goes back to a principle of spontaneous disorder. But the analogy breaks down, for the reason that the Necessity of nature is one term of an outer dualism, of which the Creator is the other term, whereas the impulses of disorder and of the refraining will are both in the soul itself, members of its constitution.

In the long course of metempsychosis, as we pass through the calamities of successive lives, Plato believed that the soul could be trained and frightened into heedfulness, and might awake at the last to a realization of its happiness. Then, as Plato says in the language of mythology, it shall be brought back in its purity to the star in which its immortal part was born and where it was indoctrinated in the everlasting truths which

it seems to have lost in this world, or holds so precariously. Meanwhile philosophy is the clear and present call to the soul to shake off its lethargy of ignorance, if it may learn a little of itself and its destinies. And fortunate the man who in this life finds a monitor, whether it be the still voice within his own breast or a friendly Socrates, to warn him of his peril before the twilight darkens into night. "There is one who cares for you. But it seems to me that, as in the Homeric story Athena took away the mist from the eyes of Diomed,

II Alcibiades  
150b

'In order that he might know well both god and man,'  
so this monitor of yours must first remove from your soul the mist which now envelops it, and then, in good time, he shall bring to you the knowledge both of evil and of good.'

## CHAPTER X

### THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

TRANSLATION FROM *LAWS* IV AND V

[The concluding paragraphs of the fourth book of the *Laws* and the opening paragraphs of the fifth are in the nature of a general preamble, a kind of preface thrown, Shandean-like, into the midst of the work. In substance this section forms a unit with the tenth book, and in the order of thought follows the exposition of the three theological theses. Here, as in the tenth book, the Athenian Stranger is expounding his views to his Lacedaemonian and Cretan comrades.]

#### BOOK IV

715E O men, we shall say to them, God, as the an-  
cient report is, holding the beginning and the end  
716 and the middle of all things that are, moves  
straight on to his goal by the seemingly devious  
ways of nature;<sup>1</sup> and with him follows always

<sup>1</sup> A passage much quoted by the Fathers; see, for instance, Clemens Alex., *Protrepticus* vi, 69. The last phrase, of disputed meaning, is thus translated in the old Latin version of Irenaeus (III, xli Harvey): Et Deus quidem, quemadmodum et vetus sermo est, initium et finem et medietates omnium quae sunt habens, recte perficit, secundum naturam circumiens.



Justice, the avenger of those that depart from the divine law. To this Justice he that will be happy clings, and follows with her, humble and chastened. But another man, being lifted up by pride, or exalted by money or honours, or even by the beauty of body when young and foolish, is inflamed in soul and made insolent, as if he needed no ruler or guide, but were himself fit to guide others. He is left desolate of God, and being so left and drawing after him others of like nature, wantons and throws all things into confusion; and to many of a sort he seems to be somebody, but after a time, and that not long, he succumbs to the unblamable vengeance of Justice, and brings himself and his house and city to utter ruin. Since then the laws are so ordered, what should the wise man do and have in mind, and what not?

In a word, what course of action is dear and consonant to God? One course there is, having warrant in one ancient report, that like will be dear to like, being measured, whereas things unmeasured will be dear neither to one another nor to the measured. Now God in a special sense would be for us the measure of all things, and in a way that no man,<sup>2</sup> as they say, can be. He

<sup>2</sup> Plato has dealt at length in the *Theaetetus* with the Protagorean doctrine of man as the measure of all things used as an argument for relativity.

therefore who will be dear to such a one must himself become such another; and it follows that he of us who is temperate is dear to God, being like, and the intemperate is unlike and hostile, as is the unjust, and so on with the other virtues and vices. Wherefore let us hold to this report as agreeing with what has been said, the fairest and truest, I think, of all reports, that to make sacrifice and always to have intercourse with the gods by prayer and offering and all divine service is for the good man the fairest and best and most effective instrument of the happy life, as it is preëminently suitable to him; while to the bad man the way is just the contrary. For the bad man is impure of soul, whereas the good man is pure, and it is never right that a good man or a god should receive gifts from the unclean; so that for the unholy much pains about the gods is labour wasted, but for all holy men most profitable. This, then, is the mark at which we ought to aim; but what are the words that would go like missiles straight to the goal?

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In the first place we say that a man would hit the mark of piety most squarely by setting aside for the nether gods things of even number and second rank and sinister omen, as subordinate to the honours due to the Olympian deities and those that guard the city, reserving for these latter the superior and contrary things. After these

gods the thoughtful man will worship the daemons, and after them the heroes. Next to these should come the special altars of the paternal gods, consecrated by law, and then honours to living parents. For it is right that a debtor should pay the first and greatest of his debts, of all obligations the most ancient, and that he should hold all his possessions as the property of those who begot and nourished him, to be rendered to them in service with all diligence—first his goods, then his body, and thirdly the things of the soul—repaying as debts contracted in his youth the ancient cares and pangs of those who suffered for him, and making return to the old in their time of need. Through the whole course of life his parents should have had and should have from him the greatest courtesy of speech, since heavy indeed may be the penalty of light winged words (over all these Nemesis, the angel of Justice, is appointed guardian); and he should yield to his parents when they are angry, and when they wreak their anger and take it out in words or deeds, remembering submissively that it is right and natural for a father to be highly angered with a son who in his opinion has wronged him. When parents die, the most temperately conducted funeral is the fairest, one that neither surpasses the customary display, nor falls behind what our ancestors have done at the burial of their parents.

718 In like manner we should perform such annual ceremonies for the dead as will keep their honour alive; and in this we most honour them, in maintaining their memory fresh and in expending upon them, when their toils are over, according to the measure of our fortune. By such acts and by such a life we shall each of us receive from the gods our due reward and from our betters, passing the most part of our existence in good hopes. . . .

### BOOK V

726 Hearken now every one who heard what was said concerning the gods and our own dear forefathers!

727 Of all a man's possessions, after the gods, his soul is the most godlike, being his truest self. To every man his all is dual. To the stronger and better things pertains mastery, to the lesser and baser servitude; wherefore always a man should honour the master parts of himself above the servile. And thus my exhortation is justified when I declare that the second honour belongs to a man's own soul after the gods, who are our masters, and after their subordinates. Yet no one of us, I might almost say, gives honour rightly, however it may seem. For honour is in a way a divine good, and bears with it nothing of evil; and he who thinks to magnify the soul by any

words or gifts or by yielding to it in any way,<sup>3</sup> without rendering it better than it was, seems to honour it, but in no wise does so. Every man, even when a child, believes himself capable of knowing all things, and thinks to honour his soul by praising it, and is zealous to permit it to act in whatever way it desires; whereas the present argument avers that by doing this he injures his soul instead of honouring it, though, as we say, the soul deserves the second honour after the gods. Neither when a man thinks that he himself is not responsible for his various sins and the many and great evils of his life, but holds others responsible and always excepts himself as guiltless, neither then does he honour his soul, as he believes, but quite otherwise; for he injures it. Neither when he indulges in pleasures contrary to the advice and commendation of the lawgiver, does he then really honour his soul, but does it dishonour by filling it with evils and remorse. Neither on the other hand when he endures not

<sup>3</sup> Τισὶν ὑπέξεισιν. There is scarcely a phrase that touches more closely than this the quick of Plato's religion. As he insists in the *Gorgias* and the *Sophist* and in a hundred other places, all the power of false philosophy, all the seduction of base literature, is in this trick of flattering the soul by bidding it forget its dual nature and yield to its egotistic impulses. He who has looked deeply and fearlessly enough into his own heart to discover there the buried roots of self-flattery is a dualist, and I do not know that philosophy means much more than this. Φιλοσοφία δὲ οὐ κολακεύει, says Clement.

to go through the labours commended by the lawgiver and the fears and pains and hardships, but gives way, does he honour the soul by yielding; for he renders it dishonoured by all such acts. Neither does he honour it, when he thinks that life at any cost is good, but then also he dishonours it; for, with a soul that looks upon all that may happen in Hades as evil, he yields and offers no resistance, instead of instructing it and bringing it to the conviction that in reality it does not know whether these things that happen under the gods of the nether world may not be the greatest of all blessings, rather than evils.<sup>4</sup> Neither, again, when any one honours beauty above virtue, is this aught but the real and utter dishonour of the soul. For such a belief says that the body is more honourable than the soul, yet lies, since nothing born of earth is more honourable than the Olympians, and he that believes otherwise concerning the soul knows not that he is neglecting this most marvellous possession.<sup>5</sup> Neither when one has his heart set on gaining money, save by fair means, or is even at ease with

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<sup>4</sup> This was the thought that gave Socrates courage to follow the command of the god through many dangers and to face with a smile of contempt the ordeal of trial and death. See the *Apology* 29A.

<sup>5</sup> Clement, *Prot.* iv: Τότε σου γνωρίσω τὸ κάλλος, ὅτε καθαρὰν τετήρηκας τὴν εἰκόνα.—Marcus Aurelius iii, 2: Τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ σώφροσιν ὀφθαλμοῖς ὄρᾶν.

such gaining, does he then bestow gifts of honour upon his soul; rather, he degrades it thereby, selling what is precious and fair in the soul at the price of a little gold, whereas all the gold on the earth and under the earth is not equal in value to virtue.

And, to sum up in a word, certain things the lawgiver has enumerated and laid down as shameful and evil and certain other things as good and fair, and he who does not set his whole mind on abstaining from the former and on practicing the latter to the extent of his power, is ignorant of the fact that any man in such a state is most dishonourably and disgracefully disposed in that most divine part of himself, the soul. No one, I might almost say, calculates the greatest award of justice, to use the common phrase, upon evil-doing; and this is the award, great indeed, that he is made like to men who are evil, and, being like to these, flees from good men and good words, and severs himself, while he attaches himself to the evil by pursuing their society. So, by joining himself to such men, he is obliged to do and suffer what it is the nature of such men to do and say to one another. Yet, properly speaking, what happens to them is not the award of justice—for justice and its award is a fair thing—but vengeance, which follows as the result of injustice. And he that undergoes this ven-

geance is miserable, as is he that escapes it, the one because he perishes in order that many may be saved, the other because he is left without healing.<sup>6</sup> And, in a word, our honour is to follow the better things, and to do what we can that the evil which is curable may thus turn out for the better.

Now the soul is the possession of a man above all adapted by nature to flee evil and to pursue and capture the supreme good, and having captured it to dwell in its company the remainder of his life. Wherefore the soul stands second in honour [to the gods], and third, as every one will admit, is the natural honour of the body. But it still remains to examine the honours [of the body], and to determine which of them are genuine and which are counterfeit, and this is the business of the lawgiver. Now to me he seems to indicate their character in this way: the body is honourable not when it is fair or strong or swift or great or even healthy—though such would be the opinion of many—nor yet when it shows the opposite qualities; but the middle state of habit in all such cases is the most temperate and at the same time far the safest, for the one

<sup>6</sup> This is a favourite thought of Plato, that punishment should be welcomed as a measure of drastic healing, and that he who escapes the penalty of wrong-doing is the more to be pitied, being left, for the time at least, to harden in sin. See *Gorgias* 476A ff.



extreme puffs up the soul and makes it arrogant, while the other renders it mean and illiberal. Money and possessions generally are subject to the same rule, to be honoured in the same proportion. For excess in all such things creates faction and enmities in cities and in individuals, while deficiency for the most part produces servility. No one therefore should be always piling up money, that he may leave his children as rich as possible; such wealth is an advantage neither to them nor to the city. Rather, wealth that will not attract flatterers about the young, yet is sufficient for real needs, this is of all best fitted for what might be called the harmony of existence, for, being in tune with our nature and fitted for all chances, it makes life easy and painless. A treasure of modesty, not of gold, we should leave to our children. And such an inheritance we suppose we shall prepare by rebuking the young whenever they show disrespect; but this result does not come from harping on the sort of admonition now common, that youth should always be respectful. The wise lawgiver will rather advise the old to show respect for the young, and to be most particular that no youth should ever see or hear them doing or saying anything base, since wherever age is shameless, there youth is certain to be without modesty. So true is it that the better instruction of both the young and their elders

is not in giving admonition but in being seen throughout life to do those things which one would admonish another to do.

By honouring and reverencing one's kindred and all those who are united by blood and by community of worship a man will have these gods of the family and of birth correspondingly propitious for the begetting of children. So too will he win friends and comrades for the kindly intercourse of life, if he esteems their services to him as greater and more imposing than they do, while of his own favours to his friends and comrades he thinks less than of their favours to him. In relation to his city and fellow citizens he is by far the best man who, before the victory at Olympia or in any other of the warlike and peaceful contests, would prefer to be victor in the reputation for serving the home laws, as the one who had served these in his life the most nobly of all men.

We must consider that the most sacred of business dealings are those with foreigners; since these are under a god's care, whose vengeance is quicker upon all sins touching foreigners than upon those touching citizens. This is because the foreigner, being devoid of comrades and kinsmen, is more an object of pity to men and gods. He that is abler to avenge is more zealous to help, and there is none so able and zealous as the pe-

cular daemon and god of the foreigner who follow in the train of Zeus the Protector. He, then, who has a spark of prudence will be very cautious to make his journey to the end of life without committing any of the sins against foreigners. But of the sins touching either foreigners or citizens that is the greatest which concerns suppliants of any sort; for the god who is witness to an agreement made with a suppliant becomes the suppliant's special guardian, and will not leave him unavenged if any wrong, even the least, befall him.

So much for the obligations that concern one's parents and one's self and one's possessions, the city and friends and kindred, in matters foreign and domestic. We have finished these in a way, and it now remains to consider the character itself of the man who would conduct his life in the fairest manner. Our next subject therefore will be the training which comes to us rather through the influence of praise and blame than directly from the laws, but which renders us more amenable and docile to the laws when passed. Now truth is the beginning of all good to the gods, of all good to men; he who will be blessed and happy will lay hold of it at the earliest moment, in order that he may live a true man for the greatest length of time. So will he be trusted; whereas he is without trust who loves voluntary

falsehood, and he who loves involuntary falsehood is a fool—neither of whom is enviable. For a man without trust or a fool has no friends; as time goes on he is found out, having prepared for himself a perfect solitude and a hard old age when years are upon him, when his life shall be as it were orphaned equally whether his acquaintance and children are living or dead.

He indeed is worthy of honour who does no injustice, but he is doubly worthy, and more, who does not even permit the unjust to carry out their evil intentions; for the former stands for himself alone, while the latter stands for many besides himself, by keeping the injustice of others before the magistrates. And he who to the best of his power assists the magistrates in meting out punishment, the great man and perfect citizen, he shall be proclaimed victor in the contest of virtue.<sup>7</sup> The same commendation should be bestowed upon temperance and wisdom, and upon all the excellences possessed by a man which are of a kind to be shared with others as well as enjoyed by himself. He who communicates them should receive the highest honour; he who is willing to communicate but lacks ability should be left to the second honour; the envious man, who is un-

<sup>7</sup> It should be remembered that there was no public prosecutor in the Greek city, and that the indictment of even such crimes as treason depended on the initiative of private citizens.

willing in the way of friendship to share any excellence he may possess, deserves censure as a man, yet the possession of virtue itself must not suffer dishonour on his account, being still a thing to acquire with all diligence. Let every man in our city be ambitious of excellence without envy. Such a one magnifies a State, contending for his own honour, while not curtailing the honour of others by slander. But the envious man, who thinks he must excel by lowering the reputation of others, is himself less ardent in the race for genuine excellence, and by his slanders takes the spirit out of his competitors; thus rendering the whole city indifferent in the contest of virtue, and doing what he can to destroy its good name.

Indignation is a faculty every man should own, yet meek too he must be so far as possible.<sup>8</sup> For we have no way to ward off the inveterate and hardly cured, or irremediable, injustice of others save by fighting and defending ourselves victoriously and by letting no wrong go unpunished; and no one can be successful in this without the spirit of generous indignation in his soul. As for the deeds of the unjust which are yet remediable, know first of all that every unjust man is unjust

<sup>8</sup> This union of meekness with the faculty of indignation occurs constantly in Plato as a type, or the fountain head, of the ethical mean which was to be worked out by Aristotle in detail for all the virtues. See next chapter, note 3.

involuntarily; for of a surety no one would ever take to himself voluntarily the greatest of evils, least of all in the most honourable parts of himself. But the soul, as we have said, is veritably to all men the most honoured thing they possess, and it is inconceivable that anyone should voluntarily admit the greatest evil into this most honoured part of himself, and live his life through with such a possession. No doubt every unjust man and every one who harbours in himself evil things is pitiable; yet it behooves us to pity the evil man only so long as there is hope of remedy. For such a one we should keep our indignation gentle by restraint, and not grow bitter like a woman and yield to relentless rage, which ought to be reserved for the transgressor whose evil is unamenable to reason or control. Wherefore we say that it becomes the good man, whatever may happen, to have the spirit both of indignation and of meekness.

The greatest evil to men, generally, is one which is innate in their souls, and which a man is always excusing in himself and so has no way of escaping. I mean what is expressed in the saying that every man is and ought to be dear to himself. Whereas the truth is that this absorbing self-love is continually and in all men the cause of all their faults; for the lover is blinded in regard to the object of his passion, so that he is

a bad judge of the just and the good and the beautiful, always fancying that he ought to honour what belongs to him above the truth. Yet, really, he who would be a great man ought not to cherish himself or his possessions, but the things that are just, whether they pertain to himself or to the conduct of another. From this same fault arises the common habit of regarding our own ignorance as wisdom, and of thinking we know all things when, so to speak, we really know nothing.

## CHAPTER XI

### RELIGIOUS LIFE: WORSHIP

Hitherto we have been studying the religion of Plato in its component elements—philosophy, theology, mythology—keeping these apart so far as their nature and overlapping would permit. It was, we observed, a notable characteristic of Plato's method that his tone varied in assurance and directness as one or another of these components was the subject of his discourse. But though religion may be thus analysed into its elements, still no one of these elements alone is religion in any full or satisfactory sense—not philosophy, which, pursued separately, leaves the soul friendless in a world of austere impersonal law; not theology, which of itself is in danger of forgetting the eternal primacy of the moral law; not mythology alone, which too easily falls into a vain, even a degrading, superstition. Nor yet is religion a mechanical juxtaposition of the three, but an emotion, an aspiration, a faith, a knowledge, a life, a something born of their intimate union and coöperation. Our last task will be to consider a little more close-



ly how these constituents of religion are blended together, while retaining their individual note.

The beginning of the religious life is in that right honour of the soul which Plato connects with his philosophy of dualism: "To every man his all is dual. To the stronger and better things pertains mastery, to the lesser and baser servitude; wherefore always a man should honour the master parts of himself above the servile." To honour the soul is to make righteousness the end of life, and the reward at once and measure of righteousness is happiness. That would seem to be the full circle of Plato's philosophy so far as it belongs to religion—a thesis so simple in appearance that many may pass it by as commonplace or reject it as insignificant. But within this circle there is range for endless experience and reflection, as he will find who attempts to walk therein. He will soon learn, for instance, that happiness is entangled in a vast network of pleasures, some of them strangely like happiness, others appearing as hideous caricatures of it, and that to see clearly in this confusion of feelings requires the last refinement of wisdom, a self-knowledge which comes only after much introspection and abstinence, or sometimes, as Plato would say, by a divine gift. And, again, righteousness is so involved in artificial standards of virtue as to seem to all but the most steadfast

souls itself no more than a product of ever-shifting opinion. Only when happiness has been distinguished from pleasure and confirmed by self-knowledge will righteousness be set free from the flux of opinions about right and wrong as a truth immutable and eternal, a law not made by man or subject to his choice, not even definable by man in its essential nature though still discoverable everywhere in its operation.

Laws 885b

But this "philosophy of the soul" takes on the colour of religion when it is regarded as subordinate to the honour of the divine soul whom we call God; for God is greater than man. "No one," says Plato, "who believes in the existence of the gods as by law and custom established has ever voluntarily done an impious deed or uttered a lawless word. If he has done so it is for one of three reasons: either he does not believe in the existence of the gods, as I said, or, secondly, he believes that they exist but have no care for men, or, thirdly, that they are placable and can be turned from their course by sacrifice and prayers." Now Plato does not here assert that a man may not from philosophy alone pursue a just and noble life—such an assertion would run counter to the great hypothesis of *The Republic*—but his words do imply that philosophy acquires a powerful confirmation in the right kind of theological belief, and that such a belief, if

raised on the foundation of philosophical knowledge, will save a man from all presumptuous sin, that is to say, will turn the tide of a man's being steadfastly away from sin towards holiness. By the right kind of belief Plato did not mean that empty lip-acknowledgment of the semi-atheists who relegated the gods to some intermundane region of slothful ease, while devolving all the government of the world upon chance or mechanical law; his belief was close to the faith of St. Paul. And, further, this belief cannot be severed from philosophy; the gods are inexorably, implacably just, because the law of justice is no more their creation than it is man's, and is no less binding upon them than upon man.

He who thus believes will be filled with awe and admiration of the divine nature; he will desire to be beloved of God even as he loves God, and will endeavour to make himself worthy of God's love by imitation of God's holiness. Good and evil there must be in the sum of things, but evil is not with the gods; it dwells in this world of ours, in the walks of mortal creatures, and the life of the religious man will be a flight from evil and an assimilation of the human to the divine nature, in so far as this is possible, by rendering himself just and righteous, even as God is free from all injustice and unrighteousness.

Euthyphro  
9E ff.

Theaetetus  
176A

This is the doctrine of *homoiôsis theôï*, "the becoming like to God," which permeates the whole of Plato's religion, and which is equally fundamental to Christianity. It is the thought that, perhaps more than any other, links the religious experience of Greece into one unbroken tradition.

Justice and righteousness and holiness may seem to be rather vague terms as they come to us from theology, but they acquire a more practical value when coloured by the mythological notion of measure. Now it is scarcely too much to say that the ethics of Platonism can be summed up in the phrase, *To be strong unto measuredness*, or as Jowett translates it more elegantly, *Hold out and observe moderation*.<sup>1</sup> And in this law two things are implied, or enjoined. First there is the needed strength, involving resolution of purpose and continuity of attention, the maintaining of the soul in its citadel against all the assaults of excess and the enticements of defect. That is a state not altering as it alteration finds, but fixed and certain, the constant opposite of *rhathymia*. In this sense justice, as an inhibition of the ever-encroaching disproportion of desires, and temperance, as an inner balance, are the absolute virtues of God and the divine virtues in man.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Laws* 918D: Καρτερεῖν πρὸς τὸ μέτριον.

<sup>2</sup> *Republic* 359C: Διὰ τὴν πλεονεξίαν, ὃ πᾶσα φύσις διώκειν

But besides this strength of purpose the law implies the need of a wisdom which comes not by willing alone but by practice. In a general way it can be said that the effect of measure displays itself in a balance of two opposite tendencies, one of which, if left to itself, passes from courage to recklessness and insolence, the other from temperance to effeminacy and abjection. Out of these two strands, the quick, obstinate, masterful, and the slow, yielding, servile, as from the warp and woof on a weaver's loom, is wrought the royal web of character; out of such elements in the temper of the people is constructed that balanced government which is neither tyranny nor licentious democracy, but true aristocracy.<sup>3</sup>

πέφυκε ὡς ἀγαθόν, νόμῳ δὲ βία παράγεται ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ ἴσου τιμήν. The words are those of Thrasymachus, but they are true in a way which he did not intend.

<sup>3</sup> The *locus classicus* for this balance of the *πρᾶον* and the *θυμοειδές* is the climax of the *Politicus* (306A ff). Other passages showing the wide application of the principle are *Theaetetus* 144A; *Republic* 375c, 410D, 503c; *Laws* 731B, 773B. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Plato's pupil developed the conception into a complete code of the golden mean, and in this form it has come down to the modern world; but it is essentially and originally Platonic, if one should not say Greek. It is important to add that Aristotle, by separating God so absolutely from the world, left a chasm between the contemplative life and the law of measure which has had mischievous consequences for religion. Plato's conception of God as the personal cause of measure is a safer guide for both contemplation and conduct, and for the full religious life which is the harmonious union of the two.

Beyond this it is difficult to formulate the law. There is no ready rule that tells a man in each of his acts what is the right measure and what is excess or defect; and it is a remarkable trait of the Dialogues that, with all their discussion of morality and of the various virtues, they contain nothing corresponding to a Jesuitical casuistry or even approaching the precepts of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. This omission may be due in part to the fact that Plato was surveying a new field and left the details to be filled in by later hands. But in part also, I think, his reticence must be attributed to his perception of the lack of finality in any such prescriptions.

*Politicus* 294A "It is not for the law," he declares, "comprehending what is best and most just for all men at once, to lay down exact rules as to what is the highest good for them. The dissimilarities of men and their conduct, and the fact that nothing of humanity ever, so to speak, abides in quiet, preclude the possibility of any simple code which shall be universal and permanent." Plato would say that in the tangled events of life we have no lawgiver, human or divine, to tell us once for all what we should do and from what we should refrain, but that our only guide is the wisdom of experience. Knowledge comes slowly by observation and tradition, and even so is never final.

This is the paradox of morality, from which

there is no escaping. If we look upon the actual events of life, justice and all fair things seem never to be in one stay; and this is so true that most men, whose eyes are made dizzy by gazing too persistently upon the revolving wheels of change, see nothing at last but custom and artifice: that is just, they declare, which today is so esteemed, and that is fair which today gives pleasure, and today's opinion is as well based as yesterday's or tomorrow's. Yet there is a Nemesis that follows such a conclusion—the ancient law announced by the poets that men shall learn by suffering, and proclaimed by science that experience is a sure teacher. In so far as our working codes of justice are falsely formulated they result in confusion and thwarted growth; in so far as they correspond to the unseen forces controlling our nature they result in prosperity and sound development. So it is that through the kaleidoscopic ventures of life we learn a little of the truth and catch glimpses of a “power not ourselves that makes for righteousness.” And here is the point of contact with mythology. “In a word, what course of action is dear and consonant to God? One course there is, having warrant in one ancient report, that like will be dear to like, being measured, whereas things unmeasured will be dear neither to one another nor to the measured. Now God in a special sense

would be for us the measure of all things, and in a way that no man, as they say, can be. He therefore who will be dear to such a one must himself become such another; and it follows that he of us who is temperate is dear to God, being like, and the intemperate is unlike and hostile, as is the unjust, and so on with the other virtues and vices."

*God the measure of all things.* That is to say, for us God is the measure of conduct, as in the creation and conduct of the world he is the source and power of measure. So the passage should be read in connection with the cosmological speculation of the *Philebus*, wherein God is represented as the cause which imposes measure and limit upon the naturally unlimited. So also it falls in with the myth of the *Timaeus*, wherein creation is dramatized as the work of God who, in his goodness and freedom from envy, condescends to the original chaos and fashions it by measured and numbered form into a cosmos of law and order and beauty. Philosophy in this way, without relaxing the rigidity of its authority, blends with mythology, and religion acquires its large scope and magnificent courage. Our search for happiness in justice and temperance is no longer an isolated act subject to the charge of insignificance, but becomes part of the divine drama of the world; for by introducing measure



into our own unruly members we are imitating God and helping in that endless labour of force and persuasion by which chaos is kept in bounds. "Plato, like Pythagoras," says one of the commentators, "made imitation of God the end of philosophy, but he gave clarity to the definition by adding 'so far as possible.' The possibility lies only in wisdom, and this is what accords with virtue; for in God there is that which fashions and governs the world, whereas in the wise man there is an appointing of life and an order of living."<sup>4</sup>

And man is not left without guidance and comfort in the task of bringing measure into his life. The world, as Plato believed, was full of signs and voices indicating the presence of the gods, and in the act of worship man was able to draw very close to the divine society. Immediately after the rule of imitation by measure there follows this sentence: "Wherefore let us hold to this report (*logos*) as agreeing with what has been said, the fairest and truest, I think, of all reports, that to make sacrifice and always to have intercourse with the gods by prayer and offering

<sup>4</sup> Arius Didymus (?) *ap.* Stobaeus, *Eth.* vi, 3: Σωκράτης Πλάτων ταῦτὰ τῷ Πυθαγόρᾳ, τέλος ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ. σαφέστερον δ' αὐτὸ διήρθρωσε Πλάτων προσθεὶς τὸ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν, φρονήσει δ' ἦν μόνως δυνατόν, τοῦτο δ' ἦν τὸ κατ' ἀρετήν· ἐν μὲν γὰρ θεῷ τὸ κοσμοποιὸν καὶ κοσμοδιοικητικόν, ἐν δὲ τῷ σοφῷ βίου κατάστασις καὶ ζωῆς διαγωγή.

and all divine service is for the good man the fairest and best and most effective instrument of the happy life." Such is the general principle of worship, into the details of which, as set forth in the sections of the *Laws* I have translated and in other scattered passages, we need not enter. But it is important to note that worship for Plato had two distinct aspects, the public and the private.

In its outer manifestation, in the act of sacrifice with the attendant ceremonies of procession and dance and song and prayer, Plato thought of worship as primarily a common possession of the people and as a bond of social union in the spirit. Always when the forms of worship are in question he refers to the Oracle of Delphi as the traditional centre of authority. Even the veneration of idols could be brought into his scheme, though in admitting them he makes a plea for a finer reverence of living symbols. "Some of the gods [the Sun, etc.] we can see with our eyes and so honour," he says; "but of others we set up statues made in their likeness and adore these soulless images, believing that the living gods are pleased and grateful for our homage. Yet, if a man has in his house such treasures as a father or a mother or one of an earlier generation stricken in years, let him never suppose that any graven statue will have more

authority for him than this image he possesses at the hearth of his home, if he serve it duly and well.”<sup>5</sup> So much Plato would grant to the family as a smaller community within the larger community of the city. But generally he is explicit, almost fanatic one might say, in his repudiation of anything leaning towards the setting up of independent rites. In a beautiful passage of the *Laws*, where directions are given for consecrating shrines to the gods and daemons of the various tribes of the people, the chief object of worship is described as the gathering together of young and old at stated periods to the end that by the association in sacrifice they may become known to one another (“than which no greater good can befall a city”), and light rather than darkness may reign in the daily intercourse of life. Dissent, with its bias towards eccentricity and its tendency to dissipate reverence in rationalism, would have been, and indeed was, abhorrent to Plato in all its forms. “For you see,” said Socrates to a young man who was dejected because he knew not how to worship the gods acceptably in return for their beneficence to men,—“you see that the god of Delphi, when some one asked him

738c ff.

<sup>5</sup> For a defence of idols, which might be appropriated by any sacramentalist, see Maximus Tyrius ii, especially 2 f: Δοκοῦσιν δὴ μοι καὶ οἱ νομοθέται, καθάπερ τινὶ παίδων ἀγέλη, ἐξευρεῖν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ταυτὶ τὰ ἀγάλματα, σημεῖα τῆς πρὸς τὸ θεῖον τιμῆς, καὶ ὥσπερ χειραγωγίαν τινὰ καὶ ὁδὸν πρὸς ἀνάμνησιν.

such a question, replied, 'By the law and custom of the city,'"<sup>6</sup> That was the spirit of religion which Plato learnt from his master, and to which he held through all the years of his life.

And with this law and custom of the city, which should determine for the individual the ceremonial rites, went another law, that of tradition, which interpreted for him the reason and inner meaning of worship. Tradition, report, the ancient saying, are for Plato the intimation of divine things which was given to men in old days, almost by revelation one might say, when life was larger and simpler and religious truth was less involved in the complications of worldly knowledge, and when the heroic children of the gods heard what they took to be the immediate voice of their fathers. This intimation of divine sonship was the deposit, kept alive in the obscure consciousness of the people, handed down and developed by a succession of great teachers such as Pythagoras and the earlier theologians of the Bacchic and Orphic societies, and proclaimed to the initiated in the mysteries. It is not very different from the Christian theory of tradition, though less precise and dogmatic.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Νόμῳ πόλεως, Xenophon, *Mem.* IV, iii, 16.—For the political function of worship, see Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.*, VIII, ix, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Plato's general term for tradition in this sense is παλαιὸς λόγος or παλαιοὶ λόγοι (e. g. *Phaedo* 70c; *Laos* 715E, 738c; and

But if Plato was a strong upholder of what today would be called conformity, believing that a certain humble docility of mind was the safest attitude in these matters which are revealed to us only in hints and symbols and adumbrations, it would be a gross mistake to infer therefrom that religion for him in any way approached the communistic sense of human fellowship as defined by Durkheim and other writers of the humanitarian school. Religion, as he thought of it, was still the knowledge of a very real God, present to the purified human soul, a knowledge confirmed and deepened but in no wise created by the common consciousness. And however vigorously Plato may have announced the claims of tradition and the consensus of mankind in questions of faith, however ready he may have shown himself to worship at the altars of his own people in accordance with the law and custom of the city where he was born, there was a point at which compare *Timaeus* 40d, *Philebus* 16c). As an original "deposit," it corresponds to the Christian παρακαταθήκη. As handed down from generation to generation, it is the Christian παράδοσις whether written or oral; thus Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* §66: Τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ πεφυλαγμένων δογμάτων καὶ κηρυγμάτων τὰ μὲν ἐκ τῆς ἐγγράφου διδασκαλίας ἔχομεν, τὰ δὲ ἐκ τῆς τῶν ἀποστόλων παραδόσεως διαδοθέντα ἡμῖν ἐν μυστηρίῳ παρεδεξάμεθα: ἅπερ ἀμφοτέρα τὴν αὐτὴν ἰσχὺν ἔχει πρὸς τὴν εὐσέβειαν. The succession of teachers is the διαδοχή, for which, with references to the corresponding διαδοχὴ τῶν φιλοσόφων, see *Essays on Early History of the Church*, edited by H. B. Swete, pp. 197 ff, 201, 242.

conformity ceased and the voice of conscience made itself heard. So he accepted the traditional gods, as manifestations more or less symbolical of the obscure daemonic powers working through the phenomenal world; but the immoral and unworthy stories attached to these sacred names he rejected indignantly. So, too, the foundations of religion go down to the instinctive belief of mankind in the gods and their providential care, striking through the superficial doubts which trouble the mind which has begun to think for itself. Yet here again the last resort is to the individual consciousness; and as Socrates said to Polus, so Plato would say to his reader: What have we to do with the discordant voices of the world? I alone speak to you alone, and unless the solitary witness within you confesses to my words, I speak to no purpose. This claim Socrates and Plato make confidently, because they know that there is that in all men which answers to the truth despite the contradictions of the forum and the schools.

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In the formality of worship this line between what belongs to the community and what belongs to the individual would divide sacrifice from prayer. Not absolutely indeed, for prayer was a part of the ceremony at the altar and so of the public function; but it was more particularly the privilege of the individual soul, and no one can

go through the Dialogues without being impressed by the constant references to this act of private devotion. Twice Plato gives what he evidently regarded as the 'normal form of such prayer, once in *Second Alcibiades* when he quotes the public supplication of Lacedaemon as a model for the individual, "that the gods would grant good things and still what is fair,"<sup>8</sup> and a second time at the close of the *Phaedrus*, when he enlarges this ejaculation into the personal prayer of Socrates:

"Beloved Pan and ye other gods that are here, give me beauty in the inward soul, and may the outward and the inward man be at one. May I hold him rich that is wise, and grant me such a quantity of gold as none but the temperate can carry."

Something yet was needed before the human soul could express itself as it was taught to do in the Gospel, and Pan and the other gods could never be the same to mankind as "Our Father." But the meaning of prayer as Plato set it forth in the *Second Alcibiades*, that it should be a humble plea for enlightenment in what we need rather than the demand of any particular desire, is singularly close to the best spirit of Christianity; and the phrase of the *Laws*, "always to have intercourse with the gods by prayer," became the es-

<sup>8</sup> 148c: Τὰ καλὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς τοὺς θεοὺς διδόναι.

established formula of the finer Platonists and of the Fathers. For the former we have the witness of Maximus of Tyre: "You indeed think that the prayer of the philosopher is to ask for things not present, but I say that it is intercourse and conversation with the gods concerning things present and a manifestation of the soul's virtue." And Clement of Alexandria was Platonist as well as Christian when he declared that "prayer is intercourse with God."<sup>9</sup>

Religion is thus both public and private, and it must ever remain the delicate task of the worshipper to be diffident of his personal beliefs and at the same time to judge for himself between the settled deeper conviction and the floating opinions of mankind. Perhaps there is an unresolved paradox in this appeal at once to the individual conscience and to common consent; if so it is a difficulty not peculiar to Plato but one that has persisted to the present day. I should say that the fairest example of it in modern times, *mutatis mutandis*, is the endeavour of the Anglican

<sup>9</sup> *Laws* 716 D: Προσομιλεῖν ἀεὶ τοῖς θεοῖς εὐχαῖς.—Maximus v, 8B: Σὺ μὲν ἡγεί τὴν τοῦ φιλοσόφου εὐχὴν αἴτησιν εἶναι τῶν οὐ παρόντων, ἐγὼ δὲ ὁμιλίαν καὶ διάλεκτον πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς περὶ τῶν παρόντων καὶ ἐπίδειξιν τῆς ἀρετῆς.—Clement, *Strom.* VII, vii, 39 ff: Ἔστιν οὖν, ὡς εἰπεῖν τολμηρότερον, ὁμιλία πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἢ εὐχὴ . . . ἀλλ' οὖν γε ὁ γνωστικὸς παρὰ ὅλον εὐχεται τὸν βίον, δι' εὐχῆς συνεῖναι μὲν σπεύδων θεῷ κ.τ.λ.—See also Dio Chrysostom ix, 17; Origen, *De Or.* §25; St. Chrysostom, *In Rom.* 585D ff.



profession to hold a middle course between the Romanists, who accept absolutely the authority of the Church, and the Bible Protestants, who, practically, reject such authority for a document which each man must interpret for himself. And I should venture to assert that, not indeed in all dogmas, but in what may be called the *êthos* of religion, no book of theology comes closer to the spirit of Platonism than Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*. It may be irksome to the imperious demands of the reason to rest in this undetermined ground of compromise and adjustment; but so it is, in this as in all things else, religion is a part of the sense of the divine as a law of measure and mediation.

Possibly the reader, while acknowledging the nobility of Plato's imitation of God, will yet miss the one thing that seems to him the very essence of the Christian life: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."<sup>10</sup> Now purity from the defilement of the world was the aim of the Platonist quite as much as of the Christian, but in the other clause of the precept there is a tenderness, a beauty of devotion, which cannot be found in Platonism. There is nowhere in the Dialogues or in the writings of

<sup>10</sup> James i, 27.—See *ante*, chap. i, note 1.

any commentator anything corresponding to the conception of imitation which a Christian moralist could draw from the Gospel: "‘Love your enemies,’ it is said, ‘bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you,’ and the like; to which it is added, ‘that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven,’ in words that imply the becoming like to God.”<sup>11</sup>

So much, it must be admitted, Christianity brought into human life which Plato had not discovered. And the admission is large. But withal it must not be magnified out of proportion. Though paganism at its best fell short of what may be called the sanctity of love, it was not restricted, as some would have us believe, to a harsh and narrow egotism; far from that. Everywhere in *The Republic* and the *Laws*, to go no further afield, the good of the individual is made subordinate to the welfare of the State, and the State itself is regarded as a kind of fellowship of friends, and friendship is glorified as it has rarely been in later times. And if Plato did not feel quite the broadest philanthropic sympathy, at least he was open to the appeal of kinship among all Greeks, and the Stoics took but a step further in the same direction when they taught that all men as the children of God were brothers and

<sup>11</sup> Clement, *Stromata* IV, xiv, 95.

citizens of one city, the world.<sup>12</sup> Nor in his personal ethics did Plato at all overlook the ordinary obligations or the tender sentiment of family and social life. Even the idea of service was not wanting to his outlook. In the allegory of the cave, when the prisoner of darkness has thrown off his shackles, and has passed upwards to the light and the vision of things as they are and to the joyous air of liberty, he is not left there in the peaceful solitude of emancipation, but is commanded to go down again into the shadows and to force into dull ears the message of hope. Always the philosopher, so long as he can make his voice heard amidst the hubbub of earthly noises, is a preacher among men, a fighter for truth and righteousness, and a bearer of the burden of human error. At times this note in Plato, particularly in that allegory of the cave, sounds curiously like the "condescension" and the "emptying of himself" (the *synkatabasis* and *kenôsis* of the theologians) by which the Son of Man made himself like to men that he might raise men to the likeness of God.

Nevertheless Plato's first interest is in morality as something intimate and private to the man

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Epictetus, *Discourses* I, ix, 1: Εἰ ταῦτά ἐστιν ἀληθῆ τὰ περὶ τῆς συγγενείας τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων λεγόμενα ὑπὸ τῶν φιλοσόφων, τί ἄλλο ἀπολείπεται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἢ τὸ τοῦ Σωκράτους, μηδέποτε πρὸς τὸν πυθόμενον ποδαπὸς ἐστιν εἰπεῖν ὅτι Ἀθηναῖος ἢ Κορίνθιος, ἀλλ' ὅτι κόσμιος.

himself. Even the solidarity of the State is taught not so much with a view to the welfare of society as with a view to illustrating the unity in subordination of the individual soul; and the misadventures of his political theory spring from his occasional forgetfulness that the just organization of the State can be used as a "writing in large" of justice in the soul only with such reservations as go with the fact that the unity of interest in society as a collection of individual souls belongs to an entirely different order from the unity of the soul as a complex of "faculties." Always his ethical method, when free of such entanglements, is to maintain that inner balance and government of character are to be striven for first, and that virtuous conduct will follow from this inner adjustment automatically. So true is this, that if, under untoward circumstances, inner harmony and public duty should become so estranged as to render the pursuit of both at once incompatible, he would advise the tormented soul to seek purity and peace in retirement from the world—an apparent sacrifice of duty only, since such withdrawal may yet be the highest service. Plato's ethics of measure and justice is certainly individualistic; the question is how far in this his philosophy differs from Christianity.

Now undoubtedly justice and love, taken respectively as the initiative forces of morality, do

lead to profound divergencies in character. Undoubtedly it makes a great difference in religion if the God whom we are to imitate is regarded as the imposer of measure on the aboriginal chaos, though He be actuated by goodness and lack of envy, or as one who "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." But it does not appear that, religiously considered, one of these principles is more intimate, more individualistic, so to speak, than the other. As motives they agree in this, that both have their original impulse within; both look primarily to the attainment of an inner condition, and only secondarily to the relations of man with man. For the Christian the love of God is the first law, upon which the love of man is to follow; and the sacrifice of God's Son was made in order that the individual believing soul "might not perish but have everlasting life." The private harmony of the man himself with his divine source and end is the primary requisite of salvation, and from this spiritual atonement the unison and concord of society will follow as a natural consequence.

The serious rift is not between Christianity and Platonism, but between the common Greek sense of religion as it developed unchanged at the core through all the changes of the eight hundred years from the death of Socrates to the death of St. Chrysostom, and as it persisted,

though with graver alterations, in the western world until a comparatively recent date—the great chasm is between that religious spirit and the prevailing modern ethics. The difference is in the attitude towards the distinctive reality and importance of the soul. “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”<sup>13</sup> That is the Christian note that sounds through all the Fathers of the Greek period. Clement was faithful to this precept when he said that “worship of God for the Gnostic (the perfect Christian) is the continual study of his soul and the occupation with his diviner part with unceasing love,” and that “the Gnostic is pious in that he cares first for himself, and then for his neighbours, in order that we may be made virtuous to the uttermost.”<sup>14</sup> Basil had the same

<sup>13</sup> I am aware of the different interpretations put upon this text by certain modern exegetes who translate *ψυχή* by “life” rather than “soul.” Pfeleiderer, for instance (*Primitive Christianity* II, 444), takes the text simply as an exhortation against cowardice or disloyalty at the critical moment when Christ was about to establish his Messianic kingdom. It may be (though I doubt it) that the words as spoken by Jesus had some such meaning as this; but certainly they were not so understood by the Patristic writers, and by Christianity I mean always the developed faith of Clement and Athanasius, the Cappadocians, and Chrysostom rather than any conjectural interpretation of the Gospel narrative.

<sup>14</sup> *Stromata* VII, i, 3; iii, 16. Compare also VII, iii, 13 *et passim*. This notion of the higher service almost excludes the notion of *conscious* service. The man who sets out to raise himself

text in mind, when he wrote: "Wherefore all our guard should be upon keeping the soul. Herein let us slacken not, nor for a little ease barter our great hopes. What then should we do? What else but have the soul in our care, for this maintaining leisure from all other things?"<sup>15</sup> In the Middle Ages the author of the *Imitation* took the old maxim of Seneca's so rigorously as to render religion almost inhuman: *Quoties inter homines fui, minor homo redii*. Plato would never have carried the principle of imitation to this extreme of asceticism. But for him the salvation of a man's own soul was the basis of philosophy and religion as truly as it was to a St. Paul or a Clement or a Basil. To enumerate the passages in which he anticipates the doctrine would be little less than to give a summary of all his Dialogues.<sup>16</sup>

deliberately as an example for others, is likely to end as a mere prig. The man who sets out to elevate his neighbours without elevating himself may become a mere reformer.

<sup>15</sup> *Sermo de Legendis Libris Gentilium* §§2, 6: Διὸ δὴ πάση φυλακῇ τὴν ψυχὴν τηρητέον . . . οὐ δὴ οὖν ῥαθυμητέον ἡμῖν, οὐδὲ τῆς ἐν βραχεῖ ῥαστώνης μεγάλας ἐλπίδας ἀνταλλακτέον . . . τί οὖν ποιῶμεν; φαίη τις ἄν. τί ἄλλο γε ἢ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιμέλειαν ἔχειν, πᾶσαν σχολὴν ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἄγοντας; See also Letter ccxlv: Μηδὲν προτιμότερον τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τῆς οἰκείας ἐαυτῶν ἀσφαλείας τιθέμενοι.

<sup>16</sup> Ackermann, in *Das Christliche im Plato und in der platonischen Philosophie*, makes much of the doctrine of salvation as the bond between Platonism and Christianity.

Thus the theory of imitation is only an extension of Plato's "philosophy of the soul." From one point of view the office of religion is to draw the soul up into likeness of God, from another point of view it is to draw the soul away from the world; and there may, or may not, be an element of incompatibility in these two processes, according as we understand them. In the allegory of the cave the path upwards to the divine light of realities is also a way of escape from the bondage of ignorance, and in general the Platonic philosophy might be defined as a turning of the soul away from this shadowy life and an ascent, or reascent, to a region of truth far above this

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 clouded atmosphere; nor is there any leisure for one who has been so lifted up to look down upon the business of this world and to fill his mind with the contentions and jealousies of mankind. In the same spirit philosophy is regarded as a study of death, by which Plato means a weaning of the soul from the pleasures and pains of mortal life and a preparation for a time when it shall be set free from the prison-house of the body.

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 And, again, in the passage of the *Theaetetus* which announces most clearly the doctrine of imitation, the becoming like to God is said to be a flight; for of necessity evils dwell in this our mortal nature and in this region of the earth, and



our endeavour must be to flee hence to the sphere of the gods with all possible speed.

Now in the simple faith of the Orphic sects from whom Plato received the doctrine of imitation and flight, there is no incompatibility and nothing to reconcile. God, they thought, was good and the flesh was evil—body is equivalent to tomb (*sôma-sêma*); the soul of man belongs with God, is of God, and only by some unaccountable lapse has become immersed in matter, from which by ascetic rites and the intoxication of ecstasy it may be released and once more reabsorbed into its divine source. No causal nexus exists between God and the cosmos, no excuse for the habitation of the spirit in the flesh, but a yawning abyss between two worlds. With such a belief, whether held by the ascetic sects of pagan Greece or by the later ascetics of Christianity,<sup>17</sup> there is no inconsistency between imitation and flight, which are merely the positive and negative aspects of one and the same motion of the soul.

But in Plato's religion the matter is not so simple. However at times he may seem to speak the unmitigated language of Orphism, his sober theory was of a different hue. If the God of the *Timaeus* is the model of imitation, the God

<sup>17</sup> Absolute asceticism was never the orthodox Christian view and indeed could not be held consistently with their theory of creation, but it obtained nevertheless largely in practice.

who in his goodness and beneficence brings order and form into the world of phenomena, then imitation cannot be by way of turning the back absolutely on mortal existence, nor can spiritual growth be coincident with escape from responsibilities: we too have our task and duty here and now. Yet in this same dialogue metempsychosis is presented in such a manner that birth in the body would seem to be the consequence of some fault in the soul, and the upward path ends in an eternal release from the entanglements and even the obligations of earthly life. It is not easy in such a conception of religion to reconcile the acts of imitation and of flight, and I doubt whether they ever have been, or can be perfectly reconciled, whether we must not be content to accept them frankly as they are, each in itself, and in practice strike what balance we can. After all this is only another aspect of the difficulty inherent in the view of religion as at once public and private, communal and individualistic.

The paradox of such a situation has often been stated by religious writers, perhaps nowhere much better, or at least more quaintly, than in the words of Synesius, the Platonizing Bishop of Ptolemais:

“God has made pleasure to be a kind of clasp for the soul, by means of which it endures the assiduity of the body. . . . Another may say

what drink of oblivion there is for the souls that have departed, but I know that to the soul that has entered life the pleasure and sweetness of this world are held forth as a drink of oblivion. For, descending to its first life as a voluntary wage-earner, it forgets its freedom and becomes a slave. Its duty was to offer a certain free service to the nature of the world, under the decrees of Necessity; but, beguiled by material gifts, it suffers such a lot as befalls those free men who hire themselves out for a definite time, and then, ensnared by the beauty of a maidservant, are willing to remain, admitting their slavery to the master of their beloved. . . . But those who believe in Providence and take heed to themselves, will be at once pious and observant of duty; nor will they think there is any discord between keeping the mind fixed on God and practising virtue."<sup>18</sup>

In Plato, as in Synesius, pleasure is the nail, or clasp, that fastens the soul to the body, regarded at one time as an association of evil to be rent asunder, and at another time as a means of discipline in virtue and a field of duty. In Plato also men are here as servants of the world, whose eyes nevertheless must be turned away from the world to God. Nor, I think, do these apparently conflicting views represent different stages in Plato's growth (though no doubt some change of em-

<sup>18</sup> *Dio* §6; *De Insomn.* §5; *De Prov.* I, §11. The last section, from the *De Providentia*, should be read in full.

phasis his view of life did undergo), so much as a constant recognition of the fact that religion cannot be simplified into a monistic formula. It would be a blessed relief from anxiety and hesitation, if we might conform our conduct to a simple metaphysical abstraction, as the pure ascetic or the pure humanitarian or even the honest votary of pleasure professes to do; but that is a forbidden blessing which the wise man, Christian or Platonist, will forgo.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Baron Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion* II, 127: "The fact is that here, as practically at every chief turning-point in ethical and religious philosophy, the movement of the specifically Christian life and conviction is not a circle round a single centre,—detachment; but an ellipse round two centres,—detachment and attachment. And precisely in this difficult, but immensely fruitful, oscillation and rhythm between, as it were, the two poles of the spiritual life; in this fleeing and seeking, in the recollection back and away from the visible (so as to allay the dust and fever of growing distraction, and to reharmonize the soul and its new gains according to the intrinsic requirements and ideals of the spirit), and in the subsequent, renewed immersion in the visible, (in view both of gaining fresh concrete stimulation and content for the spiritual life, and of gradually shaping and permeating the visible according to and with spiritual ends and forces): in this combination, and not in either of these two movements taken alone, consists the completeness and culmination of Christianity."—This I take to be an excellent statement of the Platonic, as well as the Christian, experience of moral detachment and attachment: only with this difference, that in Christian mysticism there lurks always the temptation to forget that the evil of our state is an intrinsic evil, out of which we must wring what good we can, and not a necessary factor of the good.

Above all, however the law of imitation be understood, the true Platonist will not fall into the sentiment conveyed by the Plotinian consummation of philosophy in the "flight of the alone to the alone."<sup>20</sup> No doubt the primary meaning of "alone" (*monos*) in Plotinus is still rather "separation from the body and the world" than "loneliness of spirit"; but already the more modern sense of "loneliness" was beginning to encroach on the classical usage, and Lionel Johnson was doing no violence to the Neoplatonic tradition when he wrote the pathetic lines:

"Do what thou wilt, thou shalt not so,  
Dark Angel! triumph over me:  
Lonely, unto the lone I go;  
Divine, to the Divinity."

Plotinus is the mediating link between Plato and modern romanticism; but his mediation is by way of a deep perversion. It may be that Plato sometimes portrayed the religious life as one of isolation; the sentimental luxury of solitude he, as a true Greek, would certainly have scorned. Nor was there anything of sullen or morose in his conception of flight from the world. If the Plotinian phrase is to be used at all, it should be interpreted in the spirit of one of the Cambridge divines who contrived to combine with it a genuine Christian Platonism:

<sup>20</sup> *Ennead* VI, ix, 11.

“By what hath been said may appear the vast difference between the ways of *Sin* and *Holiness*. Inward distractions and disturbances, *tribulation and anguish upon every Soul that doth evil: But to every man that worketh good, glory, honour and peace*, inward composednesse and tranquillity of spirit, pure and divine joys farr excelling all sensual pleasures; in a word, true Contentment of spirit and full satisfaction in God, whom the pious Soul loves above all things, and longs still after a nearer enjoyment of him. I shall conclude this Particular with what *Plotinus* concludes his Book, That the life of holy and divine men is *βίος ἀνήδονος τῶν τῆδε, φυγὴ μόνου πρὸς μόνου*, a life not touch't with these vanishing delights of Time, but a flight of the Soul alone to God alone.”<sup>21</sup>

That is close to the right note of imitation and flight; but it needs yet to be modified and supplemented by what is the very essence of Platonism, the doctrine of Ideas.

<sup>21</sup> John Smith, *True Religion*, chap. vi.

## CHAPTER XII

### RELIGIOUS LIFE: THE IDEAL WORLD

The philosopher, Plato says, is essentially a *Republic* 475E *philotheamôn*, one who desires to see the truth set forth manifestly before him, as well as to know it. Inevitably, by the weight of this desire, the laws of justice and temperance and all the other realities of the moral life, as these in their purity are known to him in the soul, dress themselves out visibly, symbolically at least, to what may be called the inner eye; they become forms, Ideas, that move before his gaze in independent loveliness, as objects to be pursued and grasped and taken to the heart. His ethical experience transforms itself into a world of transcendent images, endowed with power to draw all men to them by their gracious influence. Why not? Shall a man say to himself that the vision of justice and beauty and the rest of the choir exists only by the fancy of his own soul, that he is the creator of these divine beings? That were a pride, an insolence of egotism, that would throw dismay into the whole range of morality. So figuratively, and still something more than figuratively, Plato's philosophy becomes Ideal, and carries the soul

into a realm of its own, which is not of this world. The vision of Ideas is like the sight of a foreign land after a long sea-voyage, in a vessel tossed by the waves and borne over the endless expanse of waters. When the coast is first seen afar off, through the mist, how mysterious it appears and how the heart rejoices! And as we draw near, and behold the green slopes and the houses here and there, we can hardly believe that these are the abodes of men like ourselves, but think they must belong to some other-worldly beings whose days are filled with happiness and peace.

But there is something in Plato's divine realm besides Ideas; God is there, and the gods, and those who accept the Platonic philosophy without acceding wholeheartedly also to his theology have made themselves free of the outer court, but have not entered into the inner sanctuary of religion. Now in the myth of creation, as it is unfolded in the *Timaeus*, God, being good and desiring all things to be like him, lays hand upon the brute substance of the flux and, so far as its nature will submit to force and persuasion, brings it under the dominion of law and order and number. He is a Demiurge; and, as a painter or sculptor works with a model before him, so his eye is fixed upon the world of Ideas, and this our world of phenomena is fashioned by him as a temporal image of an eternal pattern. And in this cosmic



drama man too plays a part. He has that within him which corresponds to the dualism of God and Necessity; the soul possesses an authority and freedom, as Maximus the Platonist of Tyre expresses it,<sup>1</sup> akin to the divine, and at the same time it is troubled by passions which are similar to the restless motions of unformed matter. By reason of this double nature, he is under obligation, or at least has the power, to render himself like to God by bringing law and order into the unruly members of his own being, as God exercises government upon the lawless elements of the material world. One may hesitate to say whether in this act of self-ordering the soul looks upon the Ideas of goodness and beauty and justice and all the rest and so becomes good and beautiful and just, or by becoming good and beautiful and just the soul strengthens its faculty of vision so as to behold the spectacle of eternal verities; the two processes, perhaps, are rather concomitant and mutual than sequent as cause and effect. But one may say more certainly that at the end, after many lives and repeated lessons, the soul may purge itself of its passions so as to be raised, like God, into that celestial happiness which consists in the unbroken contemplation of the perfect and everlasting world of Ideas.

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophoumena* xiii, 8B: Τοιαύτην ὁρῶ καὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τὴν διαγωγὴν τοῦ βίου, ἀμφίβιον καὶ κεκραμένην ὁμοῦ ἐξουσία καὶ ἀνάγκη κ.τ.λ.

It would be hard to overestimate the distinction given to the common conception of imitation by Plato's peculiar doctrine of God *and* Ideas. Platonism may soar into regions dim and remote, but it never vanishes away in the abysmal Absolute of metaphysics or the equally abysmal Person of pantheism. The mythology of the *Timaeus* has room for a world-soul as for the individual souls of men, but these are kept forever apart from the supreme Deity, while the orb of Ideas, spread before the gaze of God and man alike, maintains its manifold identity without dissolving into a pale abstraction. And with the elimination of metaphysics and pantheism the practice of religion is saved from one and the other form of mysticism, whether it be the effort of a soul to lose itself in some ultimate negation of the reason or to forget its own personality in ecstatic union with God. No doubt to some straining spirits this limitation will appear a weakness rather than a strength, a derogation at once from the majesty of God and the dignity of man. Whether they be right or wrong, this, at least, ought to be recognized as the special note of Platonism, that it can rise to a high level of spiritual contemplation without abandoning the sense of distinctions. And I for my part, weighing as well as I can the records of the religious life in the Orient and the Occident, am persuaded that pantheism and

metaphysics are a perversion of spiritual truth which can be explained by just that difficulty of maintaining distinctions in the dizzy flight of the soul upwards. I have come to believe, moreover, that the way of mysticism, even when it denotes a genuine effort of the spirit and however fine its fruits may appear (for there is also a bastard mysticism of the senses which masquerades as spirituality), is a way perillous to the soul's health and misses still at the end the balance and measure and steadfastness, the tranquil happiness in a word, of a sounder religious experience.

The difference between these two types of *homoiôsis* strikes so deep into the whole religious life that we may turn aside here to look briefly into the history of the matter by way of anticipating what belongs properly to another volume of our series. The philosophic basis for mysticism was laid by Aristotle; and it ought not to be without significance that this step was taken by one who, however great his services were otherwise to scientific philosophy, had less of the religious mind than his predecessor. Now Aristotle repudiated Plato's scheme of Ideas as existences separate from phenomena, and regarded them as the forms in, or of, particular objects. With this rejection of the Ideal world God was left alone, in solitary majesty, one may say, to occupy the whole sphere of the divine. And Aristotle did

not stop here, but still further altered the conception of God himself. To Plato the deity, as the prototype of all soul, was the self-moving power which, not moved from without, was the source of all outer motion. Aristotle, not content with this halfway position, but yielding to the urgent drive of abstract reason, proceeded to define God as the *unmoved* mover, the absolute unity behind the moving diversity of the world. As such, deity is beyond space and without feeling or quality or substance; his activity, perfect in itself, is confined to that *theôria*, as described in the famous passage of the *Ethics*, which is not vision of the Ideas, but pure thinking without content of thought, a completely abstracted self-contemplation. There remains no room for the working of Providence or for divine fellowship and help; God can be associated with the world, not by his voluntary participation in the work of creation and government, but only in so far as he stands aloof as the absolute end and goal of all things, identical thus in a manner with Plato's impersonal Idea of the Good, as that which "being desired so imparts motion, and moves all other things by means of that which is moved."<sup>2</sup>

So it is that the door of philosophy is thrown open to mysticism. Enlightenment will be a process of raising the soul into likeness to God;

<sup>2</sup> Zeller, *Geschichte* III, 362 ff.

but this assimilation to the divine, as it reaches its consummation in the so-called Neoplatonism of Plotinus, will be sought in ecstatic absorption into a superessential impersonal One.

The link between this metaphysical mysticism and Christian mysticism can be found in the kind of thought represented by Philo, who, purposing to interpret the Old Testament in the terms of Platonism, was led by his reverence for the Jewish tradition to a conception of the deity quite alien to Plato. His God might be defined as an unstable compound of Aristotle's Absolute and the intensely personal Jehovah of Moses. The Ideal world of Plato, losing its eternal independence, is reduced to a plan conceived within the divine mind, or to a project thrown out by the Creator as the pattern of a material world to be fashioned in its likeness. The goal of religion will not be fellowship with the gods in contemplation of the Ideal world, but a rapture and ecstasy in which the soul forgets itself and all else in its passionate approach to God alone.<sup>3</sup>

In this direction was set the Platonism of the early ages. Not entirely indeed; for a few philosophers can be found among the pagans who

<sup>3</sup> An excellent account of this will be found in *Philo's Contribution to Religion*, by H. A. A. Kennedy, though I should not give to the word "contribution" the meaning given to it by the author.

preserved the genuine tradition, and the Christians also, even those of a mystical tendency, could satisfy themselves at times with a simpler Platonic reading of Paul's great saying: "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."<sup>4</sup> But in general the philosophic Christian was carried by his theology to waver between a semi-Platonism, as it may be called, like that of Philo, and a full-blown Neoplatonic mysticism. So at one time Origen describes the passage of the soul beyond the mysteries of earth, and beyond the heavens, to the vision of the Ideal world as it is *in* God. "For there is in God a treasure of sight much greater than the spectacle of earthly or heavenly things. . . . For I am persuaded that beyond those things which are seen by the sun and moon, and by the choir of the stars, and of the holy angels whom God hath made to be 'spirit and a flaming fire,'—that beyond these God treasureth and keepeth in Himself much greater things, which He shall manifest when 'all the creatures shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.'" Then at last

<sup>4</sup> II Corinthians iv, 18.—Compare, *e.g.*, Origen *Exh. ad Mart.* §44. One of the finest uses of Platonism that I recall among Christian writers is Eusebius' magnificent eulogy of the Church in his sermon at Tyre: *Τοιοῦτος ὁ μέγας κ.τ.λ.*

we shall pass beyond the wisdom of signs and figures and attain to the nature of Ideas and to the beauty of truth itself.<sup>5</sup> In like manner Clement of Alexandria, referring to Plato's doctrine of Ideas in the *Phaedrus*, had declared that "the Idea is God's thought, which Barbarians [*i.e.* Christians] call the Word of God." And so, he argues, giving a new turn to the very language of Plato, "if we say there is such a thing as justice itself, and beauty itself, and even truth itself, we have never yet beheld one of these things with the eyes but with the reason, and the Word of God says, 'I am the truth.'"<sup>6</sup>

From this semi-Platonism it is but a step to a complete mysticism, wherein Ideas are forgotten in the longing to look upon God Himself, and to lose all discrimination in the blinding vision of the divine personality. That was the ultimate goal for Clement: "Wherefore the *gnôsis* [mystic intuition] doth easily translate the soul to the divine and holy which is akin to it, and by its own light conveys a man through the mystic stages, until it restores him at last to the supernal place of rest, teaching him who is pure in heart to gaze upon God, face to face, with perfect science and understanding. For in this consisteth the perfection of the gnostic soul, that, rising above all

<sup>5</sup> *Esh. ad Mart.* §13.

<sup>6</sup> *Stromata* V, iii, 16.

purification and service, it should be with God.”<sup>7</sup> With Origen mysticism encroached still further on semi-Platonism, and in the writings of the pseudo-Dionysius it passed into an extravagance beyond which human speech cannot go and retain any vestige of meaning.

And this mysticism, which interpreted Plato’s theory of Ideas by St. Paul’s “God shall be all in all,” was by no means confined to Alexandria, where lay its natural home. In particular it permeated the theology of Augustine, and from him spread over the western world. To the African saint, who acknowledged but one desire, “to know God and the soul, these and nothing more,” it was inevitable that Ideas should be inconceivable *nisi in ipsa mente creatoris*. God to him was the only substance, the cause of all being, the fountain of all forms; and for man the vision and contemplation of truth meant a return to God—*redire ad Deum*—and nothing more.<sup>8</sup>

But if the goal of the Christian mystic was thus different from that of the Platonic Idealist, the beginning of their paths and the ascent for part of the way were much alike, as Clement has pointed out in the opening chapter of the *Stromata* and in many other places. For the

<sup>7</sup> *Stromata* VII, x, 57.

<sup>8</sup> For Augustine’s mystical use of the doctrine of Ideas see Loofs, *Dogmengeschichte*<sup>4</sup> 352 ff.



Christian the start was in faith. Looking upon the world about him he saw everywhere hints of the ordering intelligence of a spiritual Lord. "For the invisible things of Him," as St. Paul declares, "from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead."<sup>9</sup> This intimation of God in nature, felt in all ages by all men if their heart is not hardened, is faith, obscure in its origin, uncertain in its inference, but sufficient to awaken the soul to the desire of truth. Then begins, or should begin, the self-instruction of the soul in religion. By study of the sacred Scripture, by attention to preaching, above all by hearkening reverently to the voice of revelation within the breast, faith is clarified and confirmed and finally is converted into knowledge (*gnôsis*), which is one with love. The being and character of God are no longer conjectured, but are known.

Not unlike this in its early stages is the Platonic progress towards Ideas, as expounded in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. At each chance perception of ordered comeliness that meets us in our way through the world, there stirs in the soul a dim sense of power, a something whose perfection is not of this earth. But to the Platonist this first intimation of a superior order of

<sup>9</sup> Romans i, 20.

things comes not primarily, or perhaps one should say not solely, as a revelation of God, but as what seems to be an involuntary reminiscence from some other time and some other state, when the soul, unhampered by the body and in company with celestial beings, beheld the pure realities of beauty and virtue. Those realities are the Ideas, and that other region beyond our time and space is the Ideal world, which, since it is not of our imagining nor yet is the actuality of our present life, can be only a possession of memory. The reminiscence of Ideas to the Platonist thus corresponds to the Christian's rudimentary faith in God.

For most men this memory is an uncertain visitation, a gleam that breaks suddenly through their sense of the solid material world from some sphere beyond their guess, and as suddenly vanishes away. However it may have been in ancient times, for us, with our romantic bias, the recurrence of the vision is likely to be associated oftenest with the spectacle of nature's still and untroubled face—intimations that come to us unbidden and uncontrolled, in seasons of quiet contemplation by lake or shadowed mountain slope, or where the sea is breaking everlastingly upon its shore.

There is no taking of the kingdom of Ideas by

violence;<sup>10</sup> yet the business of philosophy and religion would be to extend these momentary gleams into a continuous light, so that even now, so far as may be, the Ideal world shall become the luminous reality in which our life is passed. And not by dreaming at ease but by taking of pains must that illumination be reached, if it be reached at all. He who would start out on the path should first of all disabuse his mind of a sentimental misapprehension of Platonism which has prevailed since the seventeenth century. The error, innocent in appearance but fraught with mischievous consequences, found its most exquisite expression in *The Retreat* of Henry Vaughan:

“Happy those early dayes! when I  
Shin’d in my Angell-infancy.  
Before I understood this place  
Appointed for my second race,  
Or taught my soul to fancy ought  
But a white, celestially thought,

. . . . .

When on some *gilded Cloud*, or *flowre*  
My gazing soul would dwell an houre,  
And in those weaker glories spy

<sup>10</sup> Synesius, *De Providentia* ii, 8: Ὡς ἐκεῖνος, ὅστις ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ περιμένει τὰ δεικνύμενα καθ’ ἕκαστον ἐν τάξει προκύπτοντα τοῦ παραπετάσματος. εἰ δέ τις εἰς τὴν σκηνὴν εἰσβιάζοιτο, καὶ, τὸ λεγόμενον, εἰς τοῦτο κυνοφθαλμίζοιτο, διὰ τοῦ προσκηνίου τὴν παρασκευὴν ἀθροῦσαν ἅπασαν ἀξιῶν ἐποπτεῦσαι, ἐπὶ τοῦτον Ἑλλανοδίκαι τοὺς μαστιγοφόρους ὀπλίζουσι.—The προκύπτοντα of Synesius are not precisely the Ideas, but the simile is apt.

Some shadows of eternity;  
 Before I taught my tongue to wound  
 My Conscience with a sinfull sound,  
 Or had the black art to dispence  
 A sev'rall sinne to ev'ry sence,  
 But felt through all this fleshly dresse  
 Bright *shootes* of everlastingnesse."<sup>11</sup>

To Plato this would be a half-truth. For him also the soul comes to its birth with intimations of immortality, but these are obscured by its secular dalliance with pleasure and are further darkened at the outset of this earthly existence by contact with the flesh; it is the task of a lifetime, or of many lives, ending only with the consummation of wisdom, to convert such intimations into knowledge. Not the child but the man of tried experience is the true philosopher. The way of confirmation is by a double effort which may be defined best as attention, or study, and purification.

The veil, Plato would say, which hangs between us and the vision of Ideas is let down by forgetfulness and sloth.<sup>12</sup> Hence the first duty

<sup>11</sup> The same thought will be found in Earle's *Character of a Child*, and is reiterated in Traherne's *Meditations*. To the modern reader it is familiar from Wordsworth's *Intimations*. The last line quoted from Vaughan was borrowed from one of Feltham's *Resolves* (No. lxiv): "The *Conscience*, the *Character* of a *God* stamp't in it [the soul], doe all prove it a *shoot* of *everlastingnesse*."

<sup>12</sup> See *Politicus* 273c and *Phaedo* 99b.

of the soul, when it hears the call, is to arouse itself from its lethal state of indolence, and to gird itself as for a journey. The philosopher, as a lover of wisdom, must be a lover of toil also; the path through this Meadow of Calamity and beyond to the serene heights of memory, like the fabled road to virtue, is long and uphill, and he that undertakes to climb to the summit must be ready, as it is quaintly said, with no lame or one-legged industry.<sup>13</sup> The mind must be trained as well as the body, and what that training embraces any one knows who has followed Plato's theory of education. All branches of learning are laid under contribution. First the eyes are taught to trace the laws working in nature, so as to be able to comprehend the Ideal pattern on which it is constructed. Particularly the orbits of the stars will be as a writing in which the learner can read the lessons of philosophy, and, reading, bring back the motions of his soul to their pristine regularity. And always there is this difference between the man who contemplates the world as a theatre of religion and the scientist only, that for the former as the order of phenomena grows clearer their reality seems to fade away, while more and more they appear as puppets of the invisible Powers that move them hither and thither.

Republic  
475B ff.

<sup>13</sup> *Republic* 535D: Πρῶτον μὲν, εἶπον, φιλοπονία οὐ χωλὸν δεῖ εἶναι τὸν ἀψάμενον (φιλοσοφίας).

It was in the spirit of Plato's *Timaeus* that a later astronomer, Claudius Ptolemaeus, composed his noble epigram:

"I know that I am mortal and ephemeral; but when I scan the multitudinous circling spirals of the stars, no longer do I touch earth with my feet, but sit with Zeus himself, and take my fill of the ambrosial food of gods."<sup>14</sup>

But these studies, astronomy and the like, stand only at the threshold of wisdom, and the true science comes with attention to the motions of justice and honour and all the choir of virtues, and all their opposites, in the human soul. These the philosopher will study in the larger outline of history, as they affect the destiny of States, and then in their influence upon the lives of individual men. And always, as a lover of sight (for philosophy is essentially a desire to *see*), he will strain his inner eye in the darkness, until these powers take form and grow radiant and shine out in his spiritual heaven like the stars of the firmament.<sup>15</sup>

Attention and study are the dialectic of the soul by which it rouses itself from its indolent slumber in the senses, from its *rhathymia*, and

<sup>14</sup> J. W. Mackail, *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology* iv, 32. Compare *Timaeus* 47A. The Christians also had much to say about the *οὐράνια γράμματα*, as Origen calls them in an eloquent passage (*Philocalia* xxiii, 20).

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix C.

converts the transient dream of Ideas into the "sober certainty of waking bliss." Purification is in reality the same activity, but regarded ethically rather than intellectually; it is the endeavour of the soul to shake from itself the dragging mass of evil, and to realize what the Christian meant when he repeated the Beatitude, "The pure in heart shall see God." Much was made of this aspect of Platonism in after times, and the commentators developed elaborate rules for the life of *katharsis* as a state of mediation between the worldly life, with its "political" virtues, and the life of pure contemplation. From them it was taken up by the so-called Cambridge Platonists of the seventeenth century, who sought so to refine the body by clean and spare living as to render it a fit vehicle for a soul intent upon "joying," here and now, "as it were the joy of the soul of the universe (*gaudere gaudium animae universi*)."  
Dr. Henry More knew well, and said, that he was repeating the lessons learned from Platonic writers when he described the effects of a Christian purification:

"There is a holy Art of Life, or certain sacred Method of attaining unto great and Experimental Praegustations of the Highest Happiness, that our Nature is capable of. . . . The Degrees of Happiness and Perfection in the Soul arise, or ascend, according to the Degree of Purity and

Perfection in that Body or Matter she is united with: So that we are to endeavour a Regress from the baser Affections of the Earthly Body; to make our Blood and Spirits of a more refined Consistency; and to replenish our Inward Man with so much larger Draughts of Aetherial or Coelestial Matter. . . . In the deep and calm Mind alone, in a Temper clear and serene, such as is purg'd from the Dregs, and devoid of the more disorderly Tumults of the Body, doth true Wisdom, or genuine Philosophy, as in its own proper Tower, securely reside."<sup>16</sup>

These later writers, no doubt, added a note that jars somewhat with the harmonies they borrowed from the Academy, and this is particularly true when they soar into rhapsodies over the mystical union with God. But Plato knew the meaning of "the cleanness of sweet abstinence," as well as any Christian seer; and at times his language takes on the colours of enthusiasm, notably in the central passages of the *Phaedo*, where Socrates, speaking with the shadow of death upon him, denounces "the pleasures, joys, and triumphs of this present life," as leaden weights that hamper the soul in its upward flight.

The philosophy of purification is in fact only another name for the religious flight from the world. It is not to be confused with a sullen dis-

<sup>16</sup> Richard Ward, *Life of Dr. Henry More*, pp. 84, 12, 39, 212, 71.



content, nor does it spring from a mere discomfort in the circumstances of life; the divine discontent is of another sort. Clement was true to the Platonic tradition when he declared that "the aversion for things of the senses would not bring as a consequence the feeling of kinship with intelligible Ideas, but on the contrary by this feeling of kinship the whole being of the lover of knowledge suffers a natural revolution away from things of the senses."<sup>17</sup> Yet, if this revolution of faith has its root in a positive longing of memory,<sup>18</sup> and is a voluntary turning to the light, its first effect is felt rather as a darkening of what before stood out in sharp relief. What was far becomes clear, and over what was near to the senses a veil is drawn, as in a cool night of spring one sees a mist thicken over the low-lying valley of a stream, while the moon rides above in cloudless splendour, "and the immeasurable heavens break open to their highest." Thus it is with the soul's change of attention; the very globe of this earth, which had seemed so solid and so real, melts into the insubstantial fabric of a dream, and the men move about on it as shadows, and this our life, which had so vexed us with its fierce

<sup>17</sup> *Stromata* IV, xxiii, 148: Οὐδὲ μὲν ἡ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀποστροφὴ τὴν πρὸς τὰ νοητὰ οἰκείωσιν ἀκολούθως ποιοίη ἄν, ἔμπαλιν δὲ ἡ πρὸς τὰ νοητὰ οἰκείωσις κατὰ φύσιν περιαγωγὴ τῷ γνωστικῷ ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθητῶν γίνεται.

<sup>18</sup> *Phaedrus* 250c: Πόθῳ τῶν τότε.

pains and pleasures, fades to an illusion most vain and fugitive in the bosom of the infinite illusion—*une illusion des plus fugitives au sein de l'illusion infinie*.<sup>19</sup>

Illusion: that is the word, the illusion of the world and the disillusion of the soul. Few men perhaps are capable of a vivid or continuous realization of the world of Ideas; that is something to wait for and to strive towards. But he who does not know by experience the meaning of the word illusion, may as well close the books of religion and the works of the true poets, as, indeed, the secular and narrowly scientific habit of mind today is fast closing them. From Pindar's "dream of a shadow," from Shakespeare's "we are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep," to Tennyson's "watching from a phantom shore . . . the phantom walls of this illusion fade"—always this thought of the unreality of appearances has hovered behind the poetic vision of beauty, and has become most insistent just when the perception of physical loveliness is keenest. The poets speak the language of religion, one might say, against their will; but with the great orators of the Church illusion is the conscious burden of their

<sup>19</sup> Sainte-Beuve's ejaculation at the conclusion of his long labour over Port-Royal. The master knew well, too well, this half of the truth. For the distinction between the true and the false illusion I may refer to *Shelburne Essays* I, 122.

doctrine. So, to take a single example, when Eutropius, master of the court at Constantinople, fell from power and sought refuge from the Emperor's rage under the altar of the church he had persecuted, Chrysostom, preaching to the people with the body of the wretch cowering before them, drew this moral from the transitoriness of human grandeur:

“ ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’ These are the words that should be written up on the walls of your houses, and on your very raiment, and in the market place and the home and in the streets, on your doors and entrances, and before all in the conscience of each man, forever in view, for meditation and guidance at all times. Because the illusion of the world, and its masks and acting, seem to many to be the truth, therefore I say that these ought to be the words of each man to his neighbour daily at meals and when two or three meet together, and so he should hear from his neighbour—‘vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’ ”<sup>20</sup>

Life, the poets would hint and the preachers have vigorously affirmed, is inevitably a choice

<sup>20</sup> Charity for the fallen persecutor, courage to face the Emperor's vengeful wrath, humility in the heart that has seen the instability of life, are the lessons enforced by St. Chrysostom in what must have been about the most impressive sermon ever preached in a Christian pulpit. The sense of earthly illusion was often in Chrysostom's mind, as may be seen, *e.g.*, *In Mat.* 789B and *In Eph.* 97c.

between two interests, or sets of values, one of which must fade into unreality as the other grows more real. It is one of the constant thoughts of Plato that the ordinary man is not really awake, but is walking about, like a somnambulist, in pursuit of illusory phantoms. If the dream is mistaken for the reality, as with most of us it happens, that is because the passions obscure our sense of values. “The pleasures that men know are mixed with pains—how can they be otherwise? For they are mere shadows and painted pictures of the true pleasure, and are coloured by contrast, which exaggerates both the light and the shade, and so implant in the careless mind insane desires of themselves; and they are fought about, as Stesichorus says the Greeks fought about the shadow of Helen at Troy, in ignorance of the true Helen.” Against this witchcraft of the passions the sentence of philosophy, that only Ideas are real, must be repeated by the soul to itself as a charm (*epôidê*), until the shadows pass with the night, and the sun has arisen, and we see no longer in signs and symbols, enigmatically, but face to face, as the gods see and know.

Meanwhile what will be the manner of life of one to whom not only the palpable objects of nature but his own feelings of pleasure and pain and the like feelings of all men are a web of illusion? How shall he live, as live he must, who

has attained the intuition of religion? “How can he whose mind is filled with the majesty of philosophy and revels in the vision of all time and all being, how can such an one think much of human life?” It is clear enough what those who walk about in the shadows of time, and to whom only that is real which they can grasp with their hands and see with their eyes and relish with their senses, will make of him. “He who has broken away from what men commonly take seriously and is engaged with the divine, is rallied by the mass of mankind as mad, since they understand not that he is inspired.” Shall he not seem demented to those in the dust and heat of the fight at Troy, if he tells them that the Helen for whom they are clashing their spears is only a deceptive image, an *eidôlon*, while the true Helen is not there at all, but safe far away in Egypt?—

“Me Hermes caught away in folds of air,  
 And veiled in cloud,—for Zeus forgat me not,—  
 And in these halls of Proteus set me down,  
 Of all men holding him most continent,  
 That I might keep me pure for Menelaus.”<sup>21</sup>

What the ranks of men think of the philosopher, in this sense, we know well enough, as Socrates and Plato knew in their day. But how is it with himself? Persuaded that life is a play and not

<sup>21</sup> Euripides, *Helen* 44-48, Way's translation.

the reality, will he withdraw into a contemptuous isolation and refuse to enact a part? Must disillusion be synonymous with indifference? Plato has answered this question in what is the ripest outcome of his long experience and the last maxim of his school: "The business of mankind is not worthy of great seriousness, yet there is a necessity upon us to be serious, and this is our misfortune."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Laws* 803B: Ἔστι δὴ τοίνυν τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πράγματα μεγάλης μὲν σπουδῆς οὐκ ἄξια, ἀναγκαῖόν γε μὴν σπουδάζειν· τοῦτο δὲ οὐκ εὐτυχές. The context is full of meaning. Compare also, besides the passages already quoted, *Laws* 709A, *Phaedrus* 277E, *Republic* 500B, 517C, 604B. With these parallels before us, it is bewildering to meet a critic (Bruns, *Plato's Gesetze*) who rejects the passage in the *Laws* as an un-Platonic interpolation of Philippus. There is an interesting comment on the passage in Caird's *Evolution of Theology* (I, 159). He quotes as follows from Krohn's *Der Platonische Staat*: "Here we find a great rift in Platonism. It was as the moralizing follower of Socrates that Plato drew the first sketch of the ideal State, but it is as the metaphysician—who looks beyond the changing appearance to the real being of things—that he completes it. These two tendencies meet in conflict, yet neither can free itself from the other. The reformer, who would heal the disease of his people, must believe in the usefulness of his own art; but the speculative thinker must condemn the fleeting forms of life in view of the substantial reality that underlies them. This rift in Platonism is, however, the rift that rends the life of all noble spirits. They work in the present with their best energy, yet they know that the present is but a fleeting shadow." That is interesting; but I hardly think that "rift" is the right word, nor do I believe that Plato's spirit was exactly "rent," at least in his hours of insight, by what he calls, no doubt, the misfortune

That is a hard saying, hard to obey and still harder to interpret, but it cannot be neglected by any one who would understand the practical law of the religious life. It contains in germ what was afterwards expressed for the Christian by the single word apathy (*apatheia*),<sup>23</sup> and with this development of the doctrine in mind we may perhaps get some inkling of Plato's meaning. Now apathy, as the word implies, is freedom from the passions (*pathê*). The passions are those impulses of the mind towards something desired or away from something undesired, which run to excess and surpass the right measure of reason.<sup>24</sup> They are the feelings forced upon the soul against its will or admitted by its indolent acquiescence.<sup>25</sup> They are those motions of love and hatred, pleasure and pain, which trouble mankind by of our state. Newman, I take it, came nearer to the true paradox of the spiritual life as Plato felt it, in such sermons as that entitled *The Greatness and Littleness of Human Life*, on which Wilfrid Ward has commented worthily in his *Last Lectures* (p. 138).

<sup>23</sup> Apathy was the catchword of the Stoics also, from whom, more immediately, it was taken over into Christianity. But the meaning of the word as it is employed by Christians is far closer to the philosophy of Plato than to that of Chrysippus or Epicetetus.

<sup>24</sup> Clement, *Stromata* II, xiii, 59.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid* II, xx, 110: 'Ο μὲν οὖν ἀπλοῦς λόγος τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς φιλοσοφίας τὰ πάθη πάντα ἐναπερείσματα τῆς ψυχῆς φησι εἶναι τῆς μαλθακῆς καὶ εἰκούσης καὶ οἶον ἐναποσφραγίσματα τῶν πνευματικῶν δυνάμεων, πρὸς ἃς ἡ πάλη ἡμῶν.

false presentments of reality. More than that: they are the failures of the soul to resist a natural inclination towards things ephemeral and imperfect, even though in themselves innocent, and to raise itself to the contemplation of what is eternal and divine. The feelings and emotions in themselves are not passions, but become passions when they are allowed to break into and overrun what should be the inviolable stronghold of our being.

So much is clear, that *apatheia* is not at all the "apathy" denoted by its English equivalent. There is nothing of sluggishness, or mean indifference, or brutish insensibility, in the content of the Greek word as developed by Christianity from the Platonic philosophy. Apathy, so understood, in its perfection is the attribute of God, who, forever abiding in His own character,<sup>26</sup> took upon Himself the ordering of this world of passion and change. And that man is likest God who, by learning to know himself, has learned to live his own life while bearing the common burden of humanity.<sup>27</sup> "In this way," says Chrysostom,

<sup>26</sup> *Timaeus* 42E: Ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ τρόπον ἦθει. However Plato may distinguish here between God and the lesser gods, and however he may speak in the *Politicus* (272E) of God's withdrawal temporarily from the helm of the world, he never meant to deny the reality and continual efficacy of Providence.

<sup>27</sup> Γνωθὶ σεαυτόν, τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν, κοινὰ τὰ τῶν φίλων, the triple thread that runs through *The Republic*.



“man becomes like to God, when he suffers nothing from those who would do him wrong, feeling no insult when insulted, or blows when beaten, or ridicule when ridiculed.”<sup>28</sup> More than that: we are saved by a profounder law of apathy, “being saved by the passions of the passionless Christ.”<sup>29</sup>

So perhaps we may understand the hard saying of Plato. Into the midst of the seductions of indolence and ignorance comes the terrible word of philosophy, that in all the business of mankind there is nothing to be taken seriously, yet we as men must be serious. Somehow we must be engaged in a battle whose issues are not ours, partners in a play whose prizes we condemn, in the world yet not of it, moved by sympathies which yet leave some part of the soul unmoved. He who has learned this secret is, as Plato says, *autarkês*, sufficient unto himself whether fortune smile or frown, and a citizen of the State though his privacy remains untouched. Like Hamlet's friend he “is not passion's slave,” but bears himself “as one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing.” This is a paradox which definitions will not define; but in the *Apology* and *Crito* and *Phaedo* it has been clothed by Plato in flesh and blood. In the imperturbable calm and the hu-

<sup>28</sup> *In Rom.* 453A.

<sup>29</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Or. Theol.* iv, 5: Προσειλημμένοι και σεσωσμένοι τοῖς τοῦ ἀπαθοῦς πάθεσιν.

manity of Socrates we may see the most finished model of the apathetic man as conceived by philosophy.

No doubt, as we know this human life, what wisdom can bestow must be taken largely as a liberation of hope, and it is our misfortune that religion implies a voluntary, or, if not voluntary, then an enforced lingering in the shadows of the cave. Such is the mysterious law of our existence. But even now there is something more than this, and apathy may be consistent with an inner peace of spirit very near to the purest elation. And this follows because, as a man frees himself from the servitude of pleasure and its associate pain, and makes himself master of his soul, another range of feeling opens within him, reaching upwards to a happiness of which pleasure is only a clumsy simulacrum. Everywhere, with endless reiteration, Plato upholds happiness (*eudaimonia*) as the end of religion and the immediate possession of philosophy; and he takes pains, in the *Philebus*, to reject the state of pure knowledge without feeling or personal consciousness, were such a state conceivable, as the *summum bonum*. Philosophy is something more than a cold and benumbing relief from the disappointments and tragic inadequacies that are the inevitable portion of a life transitory itself in a world of ceaseless transition. It is not a little

thing, when what the heart desired falls away, and what was unloved endures, and all our boasted skill brings forth the fruits of folly, to hear that our troubles are but "the fierce vexation of a dream." It is much, through these clouds that change in a moment from fair to ugly and from ugly to fair, to have caught glimpses, though it be darkly and in symbols, of a justice and a beauty and a goodness which are fixed beyond the turnings of mutability. And after many lives, or few, some time, if we persist in the right path and refuse to take the shadows for substance, we shall come where all the riddles are read, and what we have guessed we shall know, and what we have believed we shall see. Then indeed we shall be like the gods, and shall live with them, and with the spirits of just men made perfect, a full life in the contemplation and enjoyment of everlasting realities.

Plotinus, as I have insisted and shall have to insist again, lost sight of the true divinity of Plato when he set up an all-engulfing abstract Unity in place of a personal God and Ideas; but there is the ring of right Platonism, though the overtones may be borrowed from Christianity, in the oracle given to a friend, after Plotinus' death, who inquired where his soul might be. I quote the exquisite translation of F. W. M. Myers:

“Pure spirit—once a man—pure spirits now  
Greet thee rejoicing, and of these art thou;  
Not vainly was thy whole soul alway bent  
With one same battle and one the same intent  
Through eddying cloud and earth’s bewildering roar  
To win her bright way to that stainless shore.  
Ay, ’mid the salt spume of this troublous sea,  
This death in life, this sick perplexity,  
Oft on thy struggle through the obscure unrest  
A revelation opened from the Blest—  
Showed close at hand the goal thy hope would win,  
Heaven’s kingdom round thee and thy God within.  
So sure a help the eternal Guardians gave,  
From life’s confusion so were strong to save,  
Upheld thy wandering steps that sought the day  
And set them steadfast on the heavenly way.  
Nor quite even here on thy broad brows was shed  
The sleep which shrouds the living, who are dead;  
Once by God’s grace was from thine eyes unfurled  
This veil that screens the immense and whirling  
    world,  
Once, while the spheres around thee in music ran,  
Was very Beauty manifest to man;—  
Ah, once to have seen her, once to have known her  
    there,  
For speech too sweet, for earth too heavenly fair!  
But now the tomb where long thy soul had lain  
Bursts, and thy tabernacle is rent in twain;  
Now from about thee, in thy new home above,  
Has perished all but life, and all but love,—  
And on all lives and on all loves outpoured

Free grace and full, a Spirit from the Lord,  
High in that heaven whose windless vaults enfold  
Just men made perfect, and an age all gold.  
Thine own Pythagoras is with thee there,  
And sacred Plato in the sacred air,  
And whoso followed, and all high hearts that knew  
In death's despite what deathless Love can do.  
To God's right hand they have scaled the starry  
way—

Pure spirits these, thy spirit pure as they.  
Ah saint! how many and many an anguish past,  
To how fair haven art thou come at last!  
On thy meek head what Powers their blessing pour,  
Filled full with light, and rich for evermore!"

So far as we know, this was the last regular utterance of the oracular god whom Socrates had served and who had pronounced him the wisest of men. Apollo's words will convey to some the simple hope of a childlike superstition, to others the enigma of hardly attained truth. "Such I know the god to be," said Sophocles in one of his lost dramas, "to the wise ever a riddler of oracles, to the unreasoning a teacher of lessons lightly learned and lightly held."

THE END

## APPENDIX A

Certain critics of my *Platonism* have objected to this distinction between "philosophy" and "metaphysics." So far as the question is confined to linguistic usage they may be right, for all metaphysicians would lay claim to the title of philosophers. But the observance of a radical difference between what I mean by philosophy and by metaphysics, despite the fact that there may be, as in all such differentiations, a middle point at which they seem to merge together, I hold to be a prime requisite for clear thinking. And I do not know of any better words to denote this difference. The boundary between one and the other is passed when the reasoner is no longer satisfied to accept the data of human experience as these come to us in their paradoxical form, but presumes to rationalize the ultimate how and wherefore of things. Thus, Huxley was indulging in vain metaphysics when, admitting one set of facts and, in the name of reason, rejecting another set of facts, he reduced the world to an absolute mechanism. And the Bergsonians are equally metaphysical when, by a process of selection and rejection exactly contrary to Huxley's, they expound their theory of absolute spontaneity. As Luther, the sturdiest opponent of Aristotelian and medieval metaphysics, well said: "*Cur*" et "*quomodo*" *exitiales voculae*. It would need another Luther to cleanse the modern college halls of miscalled

philosophy. Meanwhile some notion of the distinction between philosophy and metaphysics, and some notion also of the utterly wrong deductions to be drawn from the distinction, may be gained from a glance at Prof. John Dewey's recent book on *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York, 1920).

Now Mr. Dewey is a moralist, but he is a modernist also, and as such is obliged to show that wisdom was born yesterday. "Ethical theory ever since [its beginning in Greece] has been singularly hypnotized by the notion that its business is to discover some final end or good or some ultimate and supreme law. This is the common element among the diversity of theories." And this common element, in Mr. Dewey's eyes, is more pernicious than the diversity; for it has been nothing but an attempt to justify and support the success of the predaceous by sanctifying custom in the name of abstract law and right. Hence he runs amuck through the history of philosophy; there shall be no *summum bonum*, no *telos*, no abstract principle for him, and woe to the upholders of such.

In one respect a Platonist will be with Mr. Dewey. In his onslaught upon the quibbling that goes on in the name of philosophy, the "vain metaphysics and idle epistemology" that waste the breath of teachers and befuddle the brains of students, he is doing good and valiant service. William James pointed the way when he declared that our first task was to "short-circuit" the whole business of German metaphysics since Kant. But Mr. Dewey is mistaken in his supposition that such a distinction between a genuine philosophy and a

verbal metaphysic began with modern pragmatism or, by a gracious inclusion, with Bacon. And he is a little presumptuous, to say the least, when he assumes that all the idealistic philosophy of the world has been a grovelling effort to shirk the present living actualities. "To Plato," he says, "experience meant enslavement to the past, to custom." All his striving "was the activity of an army forever marking time and never going anywhere"; all his fine words mere buzzing in a metaphysical vacuum. A better knowledge of history and a modicum of modesty would have taught Mr. Dewey that Plato, the typical idealist and the greatest of the school, was as bitterly antagonistic to "vain metaphysics and idle epistemology"—eristic he called them—as is any "up-to-date" pragmatist or "new realist"; he was in a sense the first of all pragmatists. He too insisted, as does Mr. Dewey, in season and out of season on the need of keeping close to experience and of testing all apparent truths by their results; only he thought that the highest and most significant and most veracious experience was of a kind which Mr. Dewey refuses to recognize. He believed that it was the office of philosophy to discipline the character, to adjust the perception of values, to open the inner eye upon what was actually going on in the soul, to lift this troubled and interrupted life here and now, so far as might be, into a sphere of larger and more permanent and more joyous activities. All of which to Mr. Dewey is merely marking time and going nowhere.

And Mr. Dewey is equally mistaken in supposing that in tearing down the standard of historic idealism



he is not himself bowing down to another standard in its place. Every situation, he says, shall be judged in and for itself without reference to any standard. "Confirmation, corroboration, verification, lie in works, consequences. Handsome is that handsome does. . . . There are conflicting desires and alternative goods. What is needed is to find the right course of action, the right good." Excellently well said; but will Mr. Dewey tell us what he means by handsome? Will he tell us how any man is to decide which is the right course of action and the right good unless he has some standard by which he tests and measures what is right? Beat about the bush as one will, that test and measure of rightness is one's "final end." And indeed Mr. Dewey has his standard as absolute and rigid as that set up by any of his detested predecessors, only it is a different standard from that which has been most honoured in the past, and he is trying to throw dust in our eyes by denouncing all absolutes together. He is one of those to whom, as Plato expressed it, nothing is true which cannot be weighed in the hands and grasped by the teeth. The only solid facts are those which come to the carpenter and the smith and the plowman at their daily tasks, and in such facts is the foundation of all science. The world's long tradition of spiritual emotions and conquests, theology's peace of God and philosophy's comfort of things unseen,—these are miserable illusions. All the professions of saint and sage to clarify and confirm these experiences have been the lying words of men who sought to escape responsibility and to find excuses for the greed of tyrants and the suffocating

oppression of institutions. It is pretty clear that the modern pragmatic distinction between philosophy and metaphysics is not the distinction which belongs to the Greek Tradition.

## APPENDIX B

Plato's final argument for the immortality of the soul and for the being of God is pragmatic,<sup>1</sup> but his pragmatism is of an order different in kind from the *als-ob* ("as-if") variety deduced from the Kantian metaphysics. This distinction I hold to be of supreme importance. The *als-ob* pragmatism itself is so well stated, and, as I think, so wrongly identified with the Platonic pragmatism, by Prof. J. A. Stewart in the Introduction to his *Myths of Plato*, that I take the liberty of quoting a page or two therefrom:

"The Categories of the Understanding [*e.g.* substance, causation] are so many conditions of thought which Human Understanding, constituted as it is, expects to find, and does find, fully satisfied in the details of sensible experience. The Ideas of Reason [the immortal soul, an intelligible cosmos, God] indicate the presence of a condition of thought which is not satisfied in any particular item of experience. They are aspirations or ideals expressing that *nisus* after fuller and fuller comprehension of conditions, wider and wider correspondence with environment—in short, that *nisus* after Life, and faith in it as good, without which man would not will to pursue the experience rendered possible in detail by the Categories. But although there

<sup>1</sup> For another aspect of the Platonic pragmatism I commend to the reader's notice Charles P. Parker's contribution, at once amusing and profound, to *Harvard Essays on Classical Subjects*.

can be no *speculative science* of objects answering to the Ideas of Reason, we should come to naught if we did not *act as if* there were such objects; and any representation of objects answering to these Ideas which does not invite exposure by pretending to scientific rank is valuable as helping us to '*act as if*.' The objects of these Ideas are objects, not for science, but for faith. When the scientific understanding 'proves' that God exists, or that the Soul is immortal, refutation lies near at hand; but the 'as if' of the moral agent rests on a sure foundation.

"To return now from Kant to Plato:—Plato's Myths induce and regulate Transcendental Feeling for the service of conduct and knowledge by setting forth the *a priori* conditions of conduct and knowledge—that is, (1) by representing certain ideals or presuppositions in concrete form—the presuppositions of an immortal Soul, of an intelligible Cosmos, and of a wise and good God—all three being natural expressions of the sweet hope in the faith of which man lives and struggles on and on; and (2) by tracing to their origin in the wisdom and goodness of God, and the constitution of the Cosmos, certain habitudes or faculties (categories and virtues), belonging to the make of man's intellectual and moral nature, which prescribe the various modes in which he must order in detail the life which his faith or sweet hope impels him to maintain. Myth, not argumentative conversation, is rightly chosen by Plato as the vehicle of exposition when he deals with *a priori* conditions of conduct and knowledge, whether they be ideals or faculties. When a man asks himself, as he

must, for the reason of the hope in which he struggles on in the ways prescribed by his faculties, he is fain to answer—‘Because I am an immortal Soul, created with these faculties by a wise and good God, under whose government I live in a Universe which is His finished work.’ This answer, according to Plato, as I read him, is the natural and legitimate expression of the ‘sweet hope which guides the wayward thought of mortal man’; and the expression reacts on—gives strength and steadiness to—that which it expresses. It is a ‘true answer’ in the sense that man’s life would come to naught if he did not act and think *as if* it were true.”

Now, with all due deference to so excellent a scholar as Professor Stewart, is there not here a deplorable confusion of two contrary methods of philosophizing? Kant first proves that the existence of God cannot be established by reason (so far Plato perhaps might concur). He next leaves morality dependent upon the existence of God as a regulative ideal; that is, our morality depends on acting *as if* God existed (here Plato would dissent violently). He then essays to lift himself by his bootstraps, as the vulgar have it, arguing that this *as-if* must be a fact because we act as if it were a fact (here certainly Plato would detect a fallacy).

The gist of the matter is in a sentence of Caird’s quoted by Professor Stewart: “Lastly, the Absolute Being was to theoretic reason a mere ideal which knowledge could not realize; but now His existence is certified to us as the necessary condition of the possibility of the object of a Will determined by the moral

law. Thus, through practical reason we gain a conviction of the reality of objects corresponding to the three Ideas of Pure Reason." This surely is to argue in a circle, whereas Plato's argument proceeds in a straight line. If the hypothesis of *Republic* ii means anything, it must mean that the Ideas of God and the soul and the cosmos are not the necessary condition of our knowing and following the moral law, but that this law is something which we discover by direct and immediate experience. Plato then, book x, proceeds to the belief in God and the immortal soul, not as a condition of the moral facts, but as a corollary of those facts. It is natural to assume that there is in the world at large a power corresponding to the moral law we have discovered in our personal experience, and that this power is akin to the soul of man in whom the law works. This probability is so strong that Plato accepts it as a truth not reasonably to be questioned, as a truth, indeed, which the human race has always accepted. It has too a pragmatistical warrant in the larger religious experience, which is something more than mere morality; but, again, the law of morality is not conditioned upon such a belief.

The *als-ob* philosophy in actual practice is suicidal. The Idea of God is merely regulative; we cannot be sure of the existence of God, but, in order to act in a certain way, we must suppose that he exists. But, the moment reason has dispelled the illusion of God's real existence, a man will say: "Why must I act as if God existed?" So we reach precisely the position of Protagoras ("as to the gods we do not know whether they

exist or not”), and make man the measure of all things after the manner of the sophists against whom Socrates and Plato spent their energy. As a matter of fact the *als-ob* philosophy of Vaihinger and the immoralism of Nietzsche are the twin offspring of the Kantian metaphysics, just as the brutal cynicism of Calicles and Thrasymachus was twin brother to the philosophy of Protagoras.

## APPENDIX C

Cardinal Newman, in a famous passage (*Idea of a University* 514), has described the coming and going of the vision of Ideas in language exquisitely chosen to blend the faith of a Christian with the philosophy of a Platonist:

“The physical nature lies before us, patent to the sight, ready to the touch, appealing to the senses in so unequivocal a way that the science which is founded upon it is as real to us as the fact of our personal existence. But the phenomena, which are the basis of morals and Religion, have nothing of this luminous evidence. Instead of being obtruded upon our notice, so that we cannot possibly overlook them, they are the dictates either of Conscience or of Faith. They are faint shadows and tracings, certain indeed, but delicate, fragile, and almost evanescent, which the mind recognizes at one time, not at another,—discerns when it is calm, loses when it is in agitation. The reflection of sky and mountains in the lake is a proof that sky and mountains are around it, but the twilight, or the mist, or the sudden storm hurries away the beautiful image, which leaves behind it no memorial of what it was. Something like this are the Moral Law and the informations of Faith, as they present themselves to individual minds. Who can deny the existence of Conscience? who does not feel the force of its injunctions? but how dim is the illumination in which it is invested,



and how feeble its influence, compared with that evidence of sight and touch which is the foundation of Physical Science! How easily can we be talked out of our clearest views of duty! how does this or that moral precept crumble into nothing when we rudely handle it! how does the fear of sin pass off from us, as quickly as the glow of modesty dies away from the countenance! and then we say, 'It is all superstition.' However, after a time we look round, and then to our surprise we see, as before, the same law of duty, the same moral precepts, the same protests against sin, appearing over against us, in their old places, as if they never had been brushed away, like the divine handwriting upon the wall at the banquet. Then perhaps we approach them rudely, and inspect them irreverently, and accost them sceptically, and away they go again, like so many spectres,—shining in their cold beauty, but not presenting themselves bodily to us, for our inspection, so to say, of their hands and their feet. And thus these awful, supernatural, bright, majestic, delicate apparitions, much as we may in our hearts acknowledge their sovereignty, are no match as a foundation of Science for the hard, palpable, material facts which make up the province of Physics."

Dr. Sanday, following the track of William James, has usurped the jargon of modern psychology for the same notion:

"All these things are latent. The door of that treasure-house, which is also a workshop, is locked, so far as the conscious personality is concerned. For there is no 'harrowing of hell,' no triumphant descent

into the nether world, followed by a release and return of captives on any large scale. The door is locked against any such violent irruption. And yet, in some strange way, there seem to be open chinks and crevices through which there is a constant coming and going, denizens or manufactured products of the lower world returning to the upper air of consciousness and once more entering into the train and sequence of what we call active life, though indeed the invisible processes of this life are just as active as the visible." (*Ancient and Modern Christologies* 143.)

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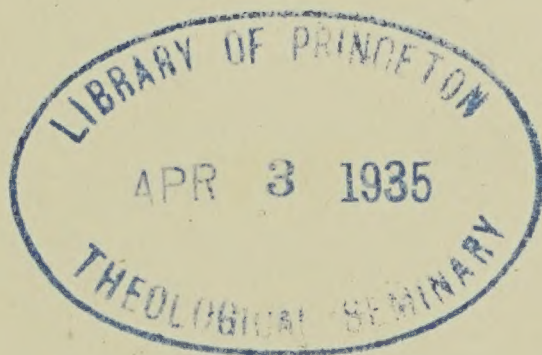




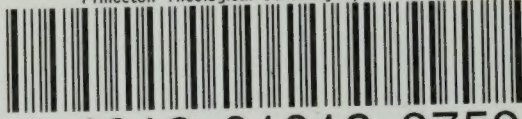


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